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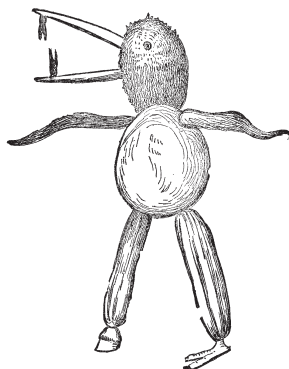
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ISSN: 1529-0999
Printed in Massachusetts

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jubilat is published twice yearly at the
University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Business & Editorial Address:
jubilat
Department of English
482 Bartlett Hall
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003-9269

Subscriptions: Individuals \$14 per year or
\$26 for two years. Institutions \$28 per
year or \$52 for two years. Please add \$5
for Canadian and foreign subscriptions.
Single issues are available for \$8.

Distributed by Ingram and Ubiquity.

jubilat is funded in part by the
Massachusetts Cultural Council
& the UMass Arts Council.

For information on how to submit,
please visit us at www.jubilat.org.

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Cover art by Lauren Haldeman

EVERYONE'S JUVENILIA

Graham Foust

It's not as if everyone's not in this life.
It's as if there sits a sky below the world.

Only two squares left on the tired year's grid,
two days until toasts to the negligible.

A portable restroom tumbling down a road—
and on YouTube of all the glowing so-called

places I suddenly find myself at night
when I should be reading or sleeping or dead—

is no tumbleweed, though it's just as useful
as any clicked-on and laughed-into-shape thing.

Too late to be what I might've been? I'll say.
Everyone's his or her own juvenilia

and everything's evidence—to fault oneself
for having been someone else is fruitless pain.

We can't help the fiction that we're in each day.
We're in each day in the same way we're in flames.

AFTER LARKIN

Six-year-old chews his toast into an Uzi,
because I refuse to buy him a toy gun.

There's a price to be paid for my refusal
it would seem. He thinks he's the passionate one.

HARLEM GAZELLE

Harmony Holiday

There's nowhere between the merely savage and the merely sentimental
so nowhere snaps into a local

dissatisfied and free

zone. Choreographing a solo for mulatto dancer about the whites only mourners bench Billie Holiday describes seeing in her childhood church. The dancer is forever/half/there, haunting each lament with the math in her movements and considered movements. Running toward the bench, then backing away, then leaping toward it again, then scooting away on her ass, as if from some predator, then tiptoeing up to ask permission to join again, then sitting, then crying, then running away, then turning back to ask for forgiveness, then nevermind, then turning back to say nevermind, then being asked to join, then the mourners can't mourn without the math in her movements and considered movements. Then she no longer cares. Then she hides from them. Then she builds a new church, a blacks only mourners bench. That doesn't work either. Impossibility is a destiny and she reaches its needles and spins on them like they mention pop song heroine in gardens from where she's been left out of the myth and written new ones in a two-way language. The roosters catch on and jiggle their coos something urgent and tender as she sidles between them like movie shot in Manhattan stoop feet dawn from now on, dissatisfied and free

EXCESSIVE PRESENCE LEAVES NO TRACES

I once read how all the cocaine burst out of Richard Prior like he was a piñata and now the kids from that birthday party, extras in a film of his, all day on a set of burnt grass and hugging balloons, how now they believe in negro angels and try to open every terrible door with a baseball bat and a skull cap or a joke about black habits or a line from a Pam Grier flick like *you don't know love what is*. I read that I was one of those kids. A bulge in the minutes makes us scream inside. I remember now, how we can make sound without being seen. How this scream creates room for silence

S O M E T H I N G N O T M E A N T F O R A U D I E N C E

Thea Brown

Filling up a cup in context, the soul's combination a shoulder to parse. Prepare the cavalry, prepare a cauldron. The ponies a-graze in the clearing, birdsong a siren high over meadows and by buzzes a bee, a plane—which more driven by purpose? Pony clatter in the bright blue, green manure, apprehension. *Mulder, why are we here?* We're toast. To gloss depth with jokes colors the depths all the way down, either fill or tint, Mr. Thoreau's sidekick. Is it the gleam or the glam? The gist: a ten-car pileup on the Beltway horizontal, glossed, gleam, or gasoline? They gist the general on horseback, more helicopters over the evac route, compressed ellipses thumping. I don't trust my intelligence to clear the mess, the transfer I am offering. Caught under spotlight, templates misfire. The pony's nostrils flare as the black eye unflinching catches all subtlety, all intentions cruel or otherwise in an offered palm, so primed for panic or heavy breath. Turning back to the pasture, a flicker of acceptance. To be here, solving. To be here, now.

ANOTHER POEM WITHOUT A WALRUS

Bryan Estes

A friend was laughing so hard
a bird popped out of her mouth.
Then another.
“Two birds with one laugh!” I cried.
She tried to explain,
but the egg on her tongue
made it impossible:
And then we chased those birds.
We thought they could be caught.

POOL

Sabrina Orah Mark

Jump into the pool, says Brother.

I do not wish to jump into the pool.

For old time's sake, says Brother, jump into the pool.

This pool looks different from the pool of yesteryear.

Make a splash, says Brother. Set an example for all the merry children lining up behind you, says Brother.

I turn around. These children do not look merry. They look very unmerry. Unmerry as fossils.

Jump into the pool, says Brother.

I do not wish to jump into the pool. There is a tree in the pool.

That is not a tree. That is Grandmother.

Grandmother, is that you?

No answer.

She is in the deep end trying to be misteriosa, says Brother. I can assure you that tree is not a tree but Grandmother, backstroking.

More children are lining up behind me. Some appear to be geniuses.

Dip the big toe first and the body will come along after, says Brother.

How soon along after?

Depends, says Brother. A day at most.

Is there a plethora of ways? I ask.

There is a plethora.

Go on, I say.

You can JUMP into the pool, suggests Brother.

Go on, I say.

Or you could jackknife, bellyflop, pencil drop, cannonball, face the music, live the life, knuckle the mouse, happy go lucky, bury the hatchet, or hubba hubba.

Or I could sink, I say.
Or you could sink, says Brother.

Grandmother? No answer. Grandmother, is that you? No answer.
I do not like this pool.

I point north. Would it be possible to jump into that pool?

Brother squints.

Brother scratches his head.

It seems to be a better pool.

From faraway, agrees Brother, it does seem to be a better pool.

A much better pool.

Loads better, says Brother.

I turn around. There appear to be hundreds of children lining up behind me, possibly thousands.

Jump into this pool, says Brother. Afterwards, you can have a snack at the snack bar.

I have been to that snack bar. It is a hideous snack bar.

It is a very hideous snack bar, agrees Brother.

I know no snack bar more hideous.

Any snack bar anywhere would be less hideous.

The popsicles are gaunt.

Impossibly gaunt, agrees Brother.

Grandmother floats by.

"I am going to die soon," sings Grandmother.

I do not know that song.

Nor do I, says Brother.

Jump into the pool, says Brother.

Don't look, I say.

They're here, I say.

Who? asks Brother.

Our parents.
Where? whispers Brother.
At the end of the line.
They are younger than they should be, says Brother.
They appear to be teenagers.
They are very beautiful, says Brother.
Remarkably beautiful, I agree.
Mother is holding a hot pink inflatable ball.
Father is laughing.
Their intention is to jump into the pool and play.
Little do they know, says Brother.
Little do they know! cheer the children.
Little do they know, sighs Grandmother.
Jump into the pool, says Brother.

Hurry up, says Brother, it is time.
Some of the children, from the heat, are drying up.
It's a cruel world, says Brother.
There is no world more cruel, I say.
A crueler world, says Brother, there isn't.
Do you know Gloria? asks Brother.
I do not know Gloria.
Suddenly I find myself in love with Gloria, says Brother.
I must go to her, says Brother.
If you go to Gloria who will tell me to jump into the pool?
Brother thinks.
Grandmother floats by.
Brother thinks more.
Our parents are too far back.
No one, says Brother. If I go to Gloria, no one will tell you to jump into the pool.
And yet the pool will remain?

Possibly, says Brother.
And I, unjumped, will remain?
I believe you will remain, says Brother.
Then obviously you must go to Gloria.
Without a doubt, says Brother.
Minutes go by.
Brother is still.
Brother?
One whole day goes by.
Evening surrounds us.
Morning comes.
Although I am in love with Gloria, resumes Brother, I have not the heart
to go to Gloria until you jump into the pool.
Could Gloria come to you?
Her magnificence makes this impossible, says Brother.

I just had a thought.
What's to think about? asks Brother.
The pool.
What else? asks Brother.
Jumping into it.
What else? asks Brother.
The Balkans.
Their winters are heavy, says Brother.
Beautifully heavy.
Like the bones of one thousand grandmothers.
Heavier, says Brother.

Has Gloria ever traveled to The Balkans?
Many times, says Brother.
This is why I love her, says Brother.
Whereas Gloria's ventures are fraught with peril, mine are fraught with
no peril, says Brother.

This makes Gloria better than me, says Brother.
And me.
And you, says Brother.

Jump into the pool, says Brother.
It appears Grandmother has built a ship.
Normally, says Brother, shipbuilding takes place in a specialized facility
called a shipyard.
In this case, says Brother, Grandmother has used the pool.
Jump into the pool, says Brother. Afterwards you can climb aboard.
The ship holds upwards of thirty men.
Grandmother is perched on the bow.
Very perched, says Brother.
Very, very perched.
I have never seen Grandmother so perched.
When she looks up, says Brother, we'll all be dead.
Even Gloria?
Especially Gloria, says Brother.
Such is the suddenness of living, says Brother.
And loving?
Same thing, says Brother.
Such is the suddenness of loving, says Brother.
Jump into the pool, says Brother.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL EARL CRAIG

Michael Earl Craig lives in the Shields Valley, near Livingston, Montana. His most recent publications are *Thin Kimono* and the chapbook *Jombang Jet*. A new book of poems will be published in the spring of 2014. Dara Wier interviewed Craig in January 2013.

Can you talk about the kinds of reading you typically find yourself doing? Not public readings of your poems, reading you do in private, because you want to for yourself (not that you don't want to take part in public readings, I don't mean that). I was going to say for your own pleasure, but that right away would be leading the witness and I don't mean to do that.

I typically find myself doing what is called “brown chair reading.” This is where I sit in the brown chair in the living room and read. I have an annoying habit these last few years where I don't always finish every book I begin reading (not a regular thing, but it happens). This is bad, I know. I'm working on this. If something isn't clicking I want to move on, but of course I feel terribly guilty, and so I'll continue dusting-off a book where it sits, collecting dust on the small table beside the brown chair, and sometimes I'll carry this book around to different places in the house as if I am actually still reading it. I usually have three or four books I'm “reading” at the same time. I read slowly. I like to take notes. I sometimes resort to reading aloud, especially if I'm about to fall asleep. And, lastly, I started writing IN books a few years ago—a practice I previously felt was a very bad idea. Only in pencil, never in ink. And very light marks/notes, so I can erase them later if I want. (Which sometimes I do.) Do you write in books?

I write in books sometimes if the margins are big enough. Typically I have

three or four books in-reading-progress waiting for me at various stations around the house. Usually there's one though that I'm more focused on than the others. I like to have different kinds of books in progress. A novel or other book that's definitely involved with revealing a story is one kind. The kind you truly want to read because you want to see what the writer's going to do with the story. But I like to have other books around that are good for more sporadic or episodic reading. I guess some poetry might qualify. One can read no more than one poem in a book and not feel guilt over neglecting to finish the book. If you don't erase pencil I suspect it lasts longer than ink. I do like to think about how pencil seems less intrusive and possibly rendered invisible when erased, still traces linger; and ink then would seem intrusive and longer lasting, but I'm not so sure. I like that time and all time is and does comes into ultra-self-consciousness with a pencil stroke. And naturally pencil brings to mind Thoreau and his family business. I think Thoreau invented something important having to do with pencils. Kind of like the way Kafka gets credit for inventing the industrial safety helmet.



Yeah, Thoreau invented those triangular rubber things you stick a pencil into, to keep it from rolling. He hated a pencil that rolled. The “ultra-self-consciousness” thing you bring up regarding pencil strokes is interesting—just the idea that we understand, as we’re marking, that we might someday want to remove that mark for one reason or another; we someday might wish to take back that note that we feel is worth the trouble of making today. So yes, now that you suggest it, it does seem that a pencil mark is the worst. I wonder what the face does when moving in to oversee a light pencil mark in a book (a tiny camera, somewhere *on the book*). It’s probably twitching almost imperceptibly.

All right then, do you ever imagine other ways of reading. Not so long ago I had a good conversation with someone who is a speed reader.

We can eat spinach very quickly and it’s basically the same as eating it slowly, but I’m not sure this is the case with reading. When you looked into the eyes of this friend, the speed reader, were they crossed?

Ha. No he’s good looking in a pretty traditional way. Nothing unusual.

What do you think of constraints or restrictions or rules of engagement, prior to writing, not so much discovered or determined during or after?

There was a time when I would give “assignments” to friends all the time, and vice versa. Things like: roll a pair of dice three times and add up all those numbers to determine how many lines long the poem will be; then write a poem that uses the words *otter*, *wrist-pin*, *molten*, *ochre*, *leaven* and *diddle*, and use no similes or metaphors; the poem is to be called IF YOU STILL LOVED ME. Every now and again I’ll still do this (give or receive an assignment), but not very often, I’m not sure why. And I don’t find myself setting up constraints/restrictions/rules of engagement for myself either. I should probably try this more often.

If you do try this sometime, any thoughts about what you might or might not include in your straight-jacket's design?

No, that's the problem.

How many sledge hammers do you have?

I currently have two sledge hammers. A nine-pound hammer made by a man in the Ozarks, and a 6 ½ pounder from Peddinghaus. It's pretty nice driving around all day with a sledge hammer in the backseat.



What are some of your memorable reading experiences? Will you tell us a few?

Well I just recently read Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*. I am a bit

of a bike freak so all the passages in this book that pertain to bicycles had my attention. For example, in the novel there's the assertion that when a man rides his bicycle too much the molecules from the vibrating bicycle work their way up into him and, subsequently, his molecules are jostled from him and enter the bicycle. This man will eventually show signs of being part bicycle (percentages are assigned to various townspeople in the novel) and his bicycle, in turn, will begin to take on some human traits. So in the book there is an older bike-riding detective who sticks an elbow out and leans against a wall when wanting to rest. Later he falls on the ground in a heap and needs to be stood up by another man (a man who rides his bicycle less, and is therefore capable of doing this). Anyway, I loved this book. It is the funniest (and strangest) book I have read in a long time.

Someone visiting me recently asked me what I think about aspirations and intentions that are never attempted, much less fulfilled. Let's say I have an idea for a trilogy of epic generational novels in poetic forms derived from public records such as birth certificates, death certificates, marriage and divorce certificates, certified things. (Did you know I'm a bona fide notary, in case you need anything in Massachusetts, I'm not legal elsewhere.) And my idea stays an idea, I never do anything more than have it, is this something to regret?

I didn't know you were a notary but somehow this doesn't surprise me at all. Regarding unfulfilled aspirations, I think it's good—good to have goals that you'll never achieve. Or maybe at least it's okay. Is it delusional? Maybe. But I think it's okay. At least once a year I'll think about trying to write a novel. I've been doing this now for about eight years. And I dream all the time about making films, but I have never even touched a video camera.

I know a lot of people who'd like to read a novel by you. Maybe watch a video you'd make, too. I'm notarizing this conversation as we speak. I became a notary to notarize a domestic partnership in a gesture of love and sentimentality. Thus far I've notarized one item. I do enjoy that the content of a piece of writing can

be made so-called “legal.”

Now for some official questions: How and where did you grow up?

I was raised in Dayton, Ohio. The suburbs just outside of Dayton. Home of the mood ring and the gas mask. I mowed lawns. I drank Mountain Dew. I egged houses. All the usual things.

Were you a writer or reader from early on? Can you tell us a story about your early days?

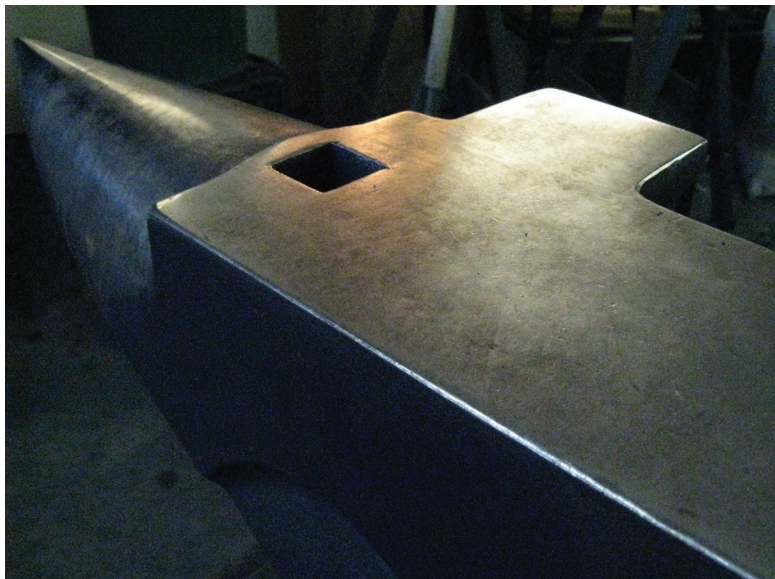
I was a lazy student, and voted Class Clown my senior year. My parents threatened me with Culver Military Academy at one point. Actually it was Mrs. McAngel. She was my guidance counselor. I remember being called in for a meeting, and my parents were there (an ambush). Mrs. McAngel had the Culver brochures out on the table. I still remember a photo of some spit-shined boots and some text about how the underclassmen would do their share of polishing the boots of their upperclassmen (this is true!). The idea was that the class clowns would be broken. Oh, and pictures of people doing push-ups and then later standing in dress blues with swords. Anyway, this of course didn't come to pass. I always did okay in high school English classes but not because I tried. It wasn't until I got to college and took a class in nonfiction essay writing that I really started to get interested in writing. That and a contemporary fiction class. An interest in poetry didn't happen until later. One of my fiction teachers had to politely steer me in the direction.

How does someone steer someone to poetry? Are you implying that your fiction teacher had reason to believe you should be writing poetry not prose?

Yes. She pretty much told me, during office hours, that I wasn't writing stories. That all my “stories” read like poems, were way too short, were

image driven, and lacked, well, the *story* I guess. She was really nice about it. I liked this lady. She really wanted me to find poetry. I think she even pointed out the door and down the hall.

When did you determine you'd make a living as a farrier? How did you go about preparing yourself to do this?



I was about to begin my third year at UMass—it was the summer between year two and three. I rode a horse across Montana that summer, leading a pack mule (Ben) who carried all my stuff. About three miles an hour, no cell phone, no iPod. I did keep cans of corn in my saddlebags. Let's just say I had a lot of time to think about things, and one of those things was gainful employment. I met probably six or seven different farriers on that trip, and it (shoeing) started to look like the logical next step after getting the MFA. In order to prepare for this I started chewing tobacco,

and practiced spitting at moving targets. I also went to shoeing school in Kentucky, and then apprenticed for two years before hanging the so-called shingle.

Of all the farrier's tools, which do you prefer? I remember when you acquired an anvil; that seemed pretty exciting.

Well, the clinch block comes to mind. Maybe because it's one of those tools you don't *really* need. It's useful but not absolutely necessary. It is small and heavy. It is designed to fit comfortably in your hand. It has an odd job—a very specific job—and trying to describe this job without drawings or photos would take a long time; but basically the clinch block helps you to prepare a nail that you've driven into the foot for the “clinch” (finishing) process. Clinch blocks are inexpensive, indestructible, never go out of fashion, and very satisfying to hold.



I like your photograph of Donkey Land.

Donkey Land is kind of a mythical place in the Paradise Valley, which is just south of Livingston. I go to Donkey Land about every eight weeks. The portal looks like a small shed on the open plain but everybody knows what happens when you step into that portal.



What does poetry do when it's not being spoken or written?

It vibrates at a really high frequency. And sometimes it groans.

When someone wants to imagine the perfect circumstances in which to write poems, what comes to mind?

Well, pretzels and root beer are nice. And getting myself into a room (a building is better) where there is no computer is also very good. When it comes to actually working on new poems the computer is still, for me, a huge distraction. I can work on poems for four hours, no problem, in a building with no computer access, and get a lot done, but if there is a computer on the desk I am constantly distracted. This is something I've been looking into recently. A friend of mine has a house in town that she does not currently live in. She has allowed me to set up a writing room above the garage. It's nice—bathroom, bed (for all the napping that poetry brings on), a big table, a chair on wheels, a lamp, a way to play music, a way to make tea, a dictionary and a thesaurus, a typewriter. This place is twenty minutes from my house. Sometimes it's a bit difficult to make myself go there, to unlock the front door and climb the stairs (reminds me of going to the gym). But once I'm there I love it. It's like 1991 up there!

Maybe this has a little to do with the unfulfilled aspirations of poetry mentioned way earlier, before the wonderful pictures. Do you think that maybe thinking, and having ideas about writing, can be wildly satisfying and eventually visible to other people as well? That maybe putting those ideas into practice can be as rewarding as any other way to practice poetry?

Yes, I guess I do think that—that it would be visible/of interest to others. Reading and writing and thinking are mental activities, and also antisocial in that they are not group activities—like cooking can be, or basketball, or eating, or talking. Yes you can read something to someone, or write

to them, but for the most part we read alone, we write alone. These are things that take place in our heads. Basketball does not. (Typically.) But anyway this mental activity of reading/writing/thinking is definitely common ground for people, and not just for writers.

Many of us tend to have a few images or thoughts that come back to us, typically unbidden, are you subject to these kinds of visitations? Are there any images or ideas, or colors, or sensations or visions or anything else you're apt to find yourself in the midst of experiencing brain-wise?

For a couple years I kept finding people facedown in my poems. Sometimes napping, sometimes procrastinating or having fallen or maybe looking into a hole or crack in the ground. I couldn't help this—this image of a person on their stomach kept finding its way back in. After a while I really had to put the ban on this but still I would find it happening again, as if the mind was not satisfied without it.

A few days ago I found out that I have been having migraines most of my life, the rarer sort that includes aura, usually a rickrack, zigzag colorful peripheral line lasting maybe ten, fifteen minutes, followed by relief that it's gone, and other visual manifestations I can't explain right now, taking up enough room in my field of vision that they would interfere with, say, driving, so I'd rather they go away even if they are sometimes fascinating rather than frightening. Thankfully these visual hallucinations aren't followed by headache or nausea and all the other painful migraine connected physical events. I wonder how often we experience commonly experienced sensations and keep them to ourselves for fear of finding out what these really are.

I think it's interesting that we really don't know what it feels like to be someone else. I don't just mean mentally/emotionally, but *physically*. For example, when someone says they wake up feeling "well rested," what exactly does that feel like? I don't always sleep well, and when I do I feel



great, but is this *great* someone else's *crappy*? What is "normal"? And then, like you said, do we really want to know? I spent a night in the hospital a few years ago with an IV drip. When I got out of the hospital I felt bloated, I looked rosy, my pants felt snug (don't dwell on this), and my fingers felt like sausages. It seemed like I had to urinate every ten minutes. Anyway, when I tried to complain about this the doctor said that this was normal, this was how it was supposed to be, and that I was just used to being dehydrated.

What are you writing now? Have you ever thought of writing a book, extended within its frames and completely of a piece, or do you write single poems that you eventually collect and select for a book? Can you meander around in there for a while?

Right now I'm putting together a new manuscript of poems (editing, organizing). I've always just written poems, one after another, and placed them in a folder. Later I collect the good ones and start to think about it as a book. Gradually I notice that recurring subjects exist—have been surfacing—but typically I'm not aware of this until later. I recently was talking to another poet who said he has typically started with an idea for a book—for the trajectory that a book would take (a theme, a subject, some parameters)—and the poems went into the manuscript more or less in the order in which they were written, and that this structure was absolutely related to the act of writing for him, which I found fascinating. I still can't really see myself doing that. Not right now, anyway. And yet I find this interesting.

You were talking recently about two ways poets can start out. Something about there being two primary ways of identifying oneself as a poet. Can you elaborate on this?

Well it seems like there are two basic camps at the beginning. One involves

wanting to imitate (or continue in the path of) the poets we love, and the other involves wanting to write a kind of poetry that we feel doesn't exist yet. The former is attempting to join the tradition we feel we've been given, the latter is walking away from it. I think most beginning writers—most writers in general—have both these impulses in them, but it also seems that people naturally lean toward one side more than the other, and this interests me because it's not something we talk much about (in my experience). It kind of goes back to that concept of not knowing what it feels like to be somebody else—in this case it's that we can never know (not exactly) what writing is/does for another person. I guess what also interests me here is the discrepancy between how we see/define ourselves within a community of writers and what it is we are actually *doing* with our writing.



We just witnessed another presidential inauguration with a poet as one of the guest speakers. Did you see this?

Yes. I have mixed feelings about the whole thing. On the one hand it's exciting—for poetry in general I guess, and for the poet, Richard Blanco, who I thought handled this event really well. But the responses generated (online and print) are so strange to read. It seems there is this crazy pressure put upon the poet to say something that any warm body will be able to understand immediately. The “issues of the day” are to somehow be touched upon, the poem is not to shock or surprise, and again it needs to be immediately digestible for everyone! And so the whole thing seems to just quickly slide away from what poetry is.

You know that Richard Blanco (City of a Hundred Fires, Directions to the Beach of the Dead, Looking for the Gulf Motel) was asked to write three poems, one of which presumably would be sufficiently right for the occasion. It seemed insulting to ask someone to write three poems, as if a poet's making a pitch to a business with three presentations, hoping one will be suitable to the client.

Oh it's completely annoying: *The panel will now look over its options.* What comes to mind is the image of the poet with his hands tied behind his back and a tennis ball (or maybe an orange) stuffed in his mouth as he's being poked along a gangplank toward the swarm of drowsy onlookers. But I have to applaud Richard Blanco. He did it. He faced the people and lived. A job well done. Frost I recently heard was having trouble with his eyes or something, and so he just abandoned his “occasional poem” and recited something else, from memory. I like that.

You mentioned John Ashbery's “Default Mode” as a perfect inaugural poem. Want to say a little about that?

Well I love that poem. I love reading it aloud. It somehow gets to the bottom of things. And of course the repetition of the word “America” would work nicely in the inaugural context.

DEFAULT MODE

John Ashbery

They were living in America at another time.
They were living in America for the FBI.
They were living in America shit wins.
They were living in America on the border with Canada.

They were living in America further gone into teats.
They were living in America that was the only good one.
They were living in America that was the only good one.
They were living in America who answers the phone and.

They were living in America deliriously.
They were living in America sadly.
They were living in America fictitiously.
They were living in America wedged.

They were living in America Stella by Starlight.
They were living in America the mighty sun.
They were living in America pandemically.
They were living in America across from the Ritz hotel.

They were living in America getting their chops.
They were living in America only for just one summer.
They were living in America beside the lake.
They were living in America for the defeatist troops.

They were living in America for the pleasure of it all.
They were living in America as well as can be expected.
They were living in America as one grows passionately
out of a love affair they were living there every day.

Does this doughnut remind you of a life preserver?
They were living in America to remind you of me.
They were living in America and a storm blew up suddenly.
They were living in America extended terms of credit.

They were living in America but it's all over.
They were living in America as tissue paper is to a comb.
They were living in America at fives and sixes.
They were living in America the same old same old.

"Default Mode" is reprinted with John Ashbery's permission from PLANISPHERE, Ecco/HarperCollins 2009.

I was sad about how the inaugural poem gave all those poetry haters out there a chance to talk once more about how dead poetry is. I've always noticed it can never be dead enough for the ones who keep wanting to say it's dead. If they believe it really is dead, why wouldn't they just shut up about it and start talking about something else they want to kill?

Yeah, like brussels sprouts.

Oh I like brussels sprouts.

Me too.

It seems that a lot of time is spent defending poetry.

This is true. If people are going to say something nice about poetry (or a poem, or a poet) they often seem to start by attacking poetry first. Even poets do this. I was just reading a very positive review of a new book of poems, and as a way to set this book apart from the “sodden rest of the poetic field,” this reviewer, who is also a poet, opened with some pot-shots taken at all the “mealy-mouthed half-wits” (the reviewer, we’re to assume, is not among them) that are out there writing poetry these days. It’s a lame tactic for a book review or a blurb, but we see it all the time.

You once told me how you get told by many that they are surprised that the shoeing of horses still happens. How did you manage to get so deeply involved in two things that at least a certain number of people like to say are past their time?

Multiple visits to the Shaker Village.



THE HELMET

Michael Earl Craig

I spun the helmet on the ground and waited for it to stop. When it didn't stop, and probably two days had passed, I stood up and began snapping my fingers, just the one hand, my right hand, and I was kind of squatting a little, just bending my knees a bit, and tapping my right foot, and smiling I guess, like I was listening to something, something catchy. And after two more days of this, this finger snapping, and after seeing that the helmet would continue to spin in the driveway, at this point I began to dance backwards toward town, down the long dirt road toward the pavement that would take me to the highway that would eventually take me to town, always dancing and snapping, always moving backwards, mile after mile, smiling, really getting down, never looking over my shoulder, falling and getting up, falling and getting up, traveling backwards toward town, snapping, smiling, really covering some ground.

EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT ANTS WE KNEW BY 1976

One ant may be larger, smaller, or the same size as any other ant.

Ants sometimes walk in a circle until they fall dead.

Some ants dig holes that are large enough for a cat to crawl into.

Soldier ants have unusually large, sad eyes.

Ants do not hold grudges.

An ant does not have bones or lungs.

An ant has to “smell it to believe it.”

Feed an ant colony with bits of bread soaked in syrup.

Give ants a wet sponge to suck.

GROUP THERAPY

He was a Cossack; he had a crew cut.

She was impious; a bacterium dined on her knuckle.

It was Nebraska everywhere.

The luncheonette despised its inhabitants.

He told the group he had not had a feeling in years.

(He'd always called her the group.)

It was a petty quibble in solid milk chocolate.

It was a pair of recently unwrapped chopsticks
on its purplish way into service.

There was a stiffening, she noticed it.

An elongation.

A cementation.

A thrumming, newsy and tepid.

The group held its poise.

An afterglow hung like a cobweb in the doorway.

I used my hand to slowly dismantle it.

I moved my hand in a single, slow movement.

Like a pope dismantling an afterglow.
And the group looked like it might speak.
In each of their minds she repeatedly tripped
on the carpeted corner of a catafalque.
“I am only one, Duane,” she said.
“I am only one,” she said, again, the slightest bit
of condensation on her upper lip.

SUN'S RIFT

Gillian Conoley

Some of the soldiers are real, and some of the soldiers are fictive.

We can see, or brush in, a cloud, puffy and likeable.

We could see which soldier might

ask us to dance,

which figure each would prefer,

our actual or our shadow.

Into, on ever goes the buzz-saw, hammer,

trunk slam. Board foundation sheer wall deck eventually become
a kind of company.

Still pall through the square for the window,

hot shroud across our backs.

Sun ungraved, braved, star without night, convective

plasma,

wonder in a nest

at the window's black net

(the best shadow
a dog's bark, earthly)

In the informal, a yellow dwarf. Light falls from sun to earth
in about
8 minutes, 19 seconds.

Currently traveling through the local interstellar cloud,
the sun is in the bubble zone within the inner rim
of the Orion arm
of the Milky Way, which it orbits
clockwise, bracelet-like, once
every 250 million years, that's how

slow it is. The sun has only 5.4 billion years left,
all highly eventful and unimaginable.

Satin
doll spits and swarms into its own face, arcing flame-loop,
corona hollow crown, then head again, ball, reliquary
bloodletting skyward, greening down, across, then comes
the Red Giant phase.

When due to its tidal interactions,

Earth will be incinerated,
or ripped
of what thread that keeps things so.

Our actual or our shadow.
Soldiers dance a carcass.
A face disappears, once it comes closer. White coil or golden hair.
To aim is to come home.
To sleep under a tree, or to swing there.
Whole cluster of faces, none seen all at once.

THE SURVEY

Joshua Beckman

Rent adverse crooked cold as dairied catacombs
as hay glass strands or wired drifting afternoon
ablush. It's like my architecture professor
used to say, "Whatever else, the subways have
provided a successful habitat for countless rats,"
privy as he was on his only visit to a playful
squeaking mating ritual he found regular
occasion to recollect. Anyhow, birds were splashing
around in their baths, lake-colored amulets were
slipping behind armoires, gentle perfumes from adjoining
fields were accidentally pressed into concrete slabs.
All told, the fanciful was making a fantastic showing.
I named my first baby silver and my second baby gold
and this baby I'm going to name Impractical Timepiece
and not care and love it anyway forever. I was one
of a million people who took part in an online survey,
and those bastards, they never emailed me back.

THE DESERTER'S SCANDAL

I tipped my reasoning
to and fro like a blank card nice but
pointy brilliant. It's a sad day when
you blush your cheeks and show up at
the recital hall for what turns out to be
nothing but a big ol tongue flapping
from the window go home go home it cries
with its ugly gruff voice so straight back home
I went. My own stamped satchel gone at with
one of those high school leather burners
while I was sleeping and then I changed and went
to the church where they were all singing songs,
singing,

Flower on your shoe
Flower on your shoe
You're a part of me sure
But I'm a part of you too

Frank as I can be just left alone
like an anchor around which wrapped
some strands of seaweed, then like
a flowerpot from a banister our eyes met
and I felt like I had to explain:
When first I began to pray I did it like a monkey,
always tipping my hat and now I just weep and weep
like I want to be left in the little valley I was
born into. Behind me a magnificent painting
of some slaying perpetually undiscovered.
I kneel with the woods at my back

and beg forgiveness really just
that I may continue to do so.

POSITION PAPER #6: LANDFILLS

Andrea Lawlor

In the new country we will shut the factories down until we have used up all the old hammers and plastic buckets and copies of *Twelfth Night*. We will stage site-specific art installations and performances in the factory spaces, and dance parties. If we used to work in a factory we will take some time off to get our heads together, maybe stay in one of the guest cabins by the sea or in the forest. If we used to work in the field of innovating new products to be produced in factories, we will also take some time off, we will try not to think so hard, maybe do our farm season or go back to art school. We will encourage innovation in sculpture and healing modalities, and we will admire the beauty of the old kind of hammers and plastic buckets. And if we want a copy of *Twelfth Night* with a more appealing cover we will collage one on ourselves, using the salvaged collage materials available in the free art building on our street, which like the libraries, will be open all night every night for the satisfaction of our insomniac art or companionship urges. When we go to the store for a hammer because we want to hang up our night paintings, we will see all the salvaged hammers sorted by type: ball peen, mallet, claw, gavel, maul, and specialty hammers for tinkers, masons, and miniaturists. We will bring our rejected three-ring binders and egg cartons to the sorting station whenever we have enough to make a trip, and most of the sorters will sort while one of the sorters reads aloud *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *To the Lighthouse* or whatever book the majority of sorters have voted in by secret ballot. When the sorters are not sorters, some will be collectors, bicycling carts around town and collecting any scrap from the elderly or those unable to cart their own scrap to the sorting station. When the sorters are not sorters, others will be menders, repairing the broken rings of plastic binders and packaging science kits out of shower curtain magnets and baking soda and so forth. And when the sorters are not sorters or collectors or menders we will be

eaters and planters and filmmakers and readers and cellists and cat-tenders and members of the trees collective and the desserts collective and the ease-of-mind collective and our mini-collective, yours and mine, coming to our hard-won consensus.

POSITION PAPER #7: LAWNS

In the country and town of the new country we will have goats and for our goats who are also their own goats we will have varietal and heirloom grasses and so if we want to have lawns we will have lawns, and we will might because of deer ticks and also to play lawn sports such as badminton or reading or laying about in birthday hammocks imagining ourselves in the English countryside, resignifying to our hearts' content as goats eat the variety buffet of grasses, and later we will drink milks and eat cheeses. Goats will eat as they like and stay cozy in sheds in the winter visited by indifferent neighborhood dogs. When it is very cold the goats shall all come inside via special passage to the woodstove room and we will watch *Grand Illusion* or *Le Voyage dans la Lune* on a projector run on stored-up shine from the summer and when we have used our summer sun we will take a shift at the gym to turn our high spirits and hard emotions into energy, we will turn our misspoken words and botched romantic gestures, our quarterback fashion fantasies and stray tufts of anger all into energy, and we will pour that sweat and huff and tempered resentment into battery cells which we will sled home so we can watch century-old light flicker onto sheets on the strawbale walls, relishing our increased ability to flow blood, cozing among baby goats and humans and looking out from the bunker or tinted moon to the snow-deep lawn, that various field—

DEVIL'S OPTICS

Margaret Ross

Color by number, by color count
numbers colored up, coloring
sums of numbered colors held
accountable to summed counts
in color, number and number sums
“How many colors were

counted?” Some. “How many
colors count?” Some; some not
described by arcs concentrically
outlined, each brow raised
over the brow of the last,
blank foreheads branded

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and a lie, then 7.
Newton described indigo
he could not see but believed
since six was the devil's number,
he saw indigo, faith
in seven measuring all things

refined enough to outwit
his own eyes like glare
on water, aftervision, gravity
hill, miracle of the Paint by Logic
image floating through its grid
proven, my eyes go numb

by seven: known planets of
the seventeenth century. Notes
in a scale, days, seventh
chord, cardinal sins. There's a ring
any list has *certain thing, certain*
thing sounding true as the rim

of a glass filled equally by air
and by water. It's a trinity of same-
colored parts. Its circumference
marks the circle in a Venn diagram
where the rainbow is
the intersecting arc that shows

common ground, by common sense
of sight, the sheer, protracted faith
to go on. *We forget we forgot*
goes the slide carousel, its ticker
tallying half-lives slides
attempt to resurrect

the score of, colors
searing through the heretofore
white screen. How believable
is the red-eyed six-year-old
self, scowling at some slight
you can't recall? Spin

your color wheel: behind
its seven-chevron shield
innumerable Pantone arrows
take their aim: Forget-me-not. Yellow

Indigo. Wild Indigo. False
Indigo. Iris, iris, bull's eye, a zero-
sum game already lost. Color proves
a fading target. It's through
a wide-ruled indigo grate
I trace what Newton said last: "as
to myself I seem to have
been only like a boy playing

on the seashore and diverting
myself now and then finding
a smoother pebble or a prettier shell
than the ordinary whilst the great ocean
of truth lay all undiscovered
before me." The sea is indigo.

LITTLE PRAIRIE

Lying next to it is just like lying
near the sea, same measure of
your breath resurfacing between
waves drawn then equally drawn

back repeats a line in practice
more cross-hatching than it is like
crossing out. Implies the depth
of a face as a room, gradually

extended into gray and blue
by smudging lines sketched straight
from life to suggest an interior
you can't even see

the end of. Gave in, gave out, both
sides of a thing. Face some mirrors
at, some away from the sun
for what I know an ocean

actually looks like from a long way
off. From here, it's a long way
to the shore where a small ship anchored,
miniature beside enormous trees

or because this actually happened
many years ago. Sails raise
a curtain on the scene. The crew
assembles, stills, watches

something flicker in and out
between the trees. Nothing else as far
as they can see. Nothing
in between them and the beach

but the ship's reflection
wrinkling, tearing anywhere
a wave cuts through. The image
frays. It's the only way time

operates, whetting a cross of x by x
so x fits any figure or an order to
repeat: how many times? Terminal time
table rustling to leave, good-bye hour

kissed free as the security
code where x makes every
digit any "Two stones resembling
human persons in the open

prairie," wrote Lewis as he walked
across our state, "Under me a river of
clear water meandering through a level
and extensive plain, as far

as I could see – the prospect
much enlivened by a few
trees" cross-hatching shadows
on the wall. The mirror there

fits each face neatly on
the next like a sheet drawn taut

across the bed you will lie down
on later, further than you

were before. Don't
lie to me, love. It happened
a long time ago. A girl
emerged from trees

and climbed to the prow. Let
a cloth she'd tied around her fall.
Nobody moved. The crew stayed
still that way some time. Then

thinking she must have been
invisible to them, the girl drew up
her cloth and climbed down. The sound
a length of rope your throat

considers, measuring some distance
in between, the same length drawn
and lowered, the curtain
breathed on. One time

I lay and listened to you
sleep. It was a small hour. Nothing
strange in what I saw, I thought
at the time, just

very bright. The foot or so
of sheet between us suddenly
flickered on. It moved in color.
Your dark room otherwise

the same. I lay still. What I thought
at first was water was a little
prairie. Tall grass rustling up
shade that broke, that rippled

all the way to the edge
of the field where I could
just make out the small dark shape
I took to be a man approaching.

II / 2 I

Lauren Haldeman

Midday, we built a fire.
On the bank of the river
where we used to kick, dive,

where fish used to nip
our toes, where rocks — smooth
as space flight — shone

in the silt, where
we had once washed our hair
and our bodies, holding
ourselves in the float — there

we built a fire for my brother. His ashes
in a clear plastic bag. We took his
ashes into our hands, our palms

stinging with burr-cuts from gathering
wood; tiny lines of blood
on our finger-pads; we held his
ashes and felt

them pulse. Even Ellie, my
daughter, two years old,
wanting so badly to

participate in the world — the whole
world — even this — even
this world where brothers

die, suddenly, Ellie took
the ashes and threw them
into the air. Ashes in her hair. Ashes

circling the cinder's
perimeter. The fire
on the bank of the river. I took

my shoes off, I stepped into
the river, I carried a handful of his
ashes with one hand, I carried my

daughter with the other &
went in. It was cold.
The dust spiraled with the clear
current, slow.

On the bank, my father shook
his son's ashes over the fire. They caught
the light of the sun there,

they were stars, they were

exactly stars right then.

Mountains down river.
A rock face, the shore opposite.
No sound. My feet,

cold in the water —
my daughter, two years old,
— she wanted to put her feet in &

she did. On the bank, the fire:
a spectral tent, a pyramid

of sulfur. My other brother,
my living brother, laid
wood against its invisible fabric.

My mother let her son's ashes
go. His unbelievable ashes. His dust.
She said his name & I
looked up.

PINK BIRDS

Alfred Starr Hamilton

Somehow, these were the pink stonewalls
That were never to have been climbed
More than ever more pink birds
Flew over into one anothers' pastures
But they all wore mourning stonewall faces
They tried to talk to one another
But it never rained on their parched tongues, they were tongue tied,
They built one parched stonewall on top of another
To have prevented the blink birds from falling on the crops
Speechlessly, they faced their own deaf stonewalls
To have put one toadstool on top of another
To have built the pink tower of Babel

BEST FRIENDS

Dan Rosenberg

I'll give you my hair if you give me your skull.
I'll give you my feet if you give me your wheels.
I'll give you your face if you give me mine again.
What's owned in the world between us anyway.
A stomach that's been punched for your hunger.
My equanimity for just one fist flowering into hand.
Just one, friend. I'll open my eyes if you open.
I'll stay beside you if you. I'm unsexed and you
are the font of hunger. Your breasts keep time
with my breathing. Let's go to a show and you've
already seen it. Let's watch old movies and you're
a bristle cocked for adventure. You're a flea circus
and I'm a metal comb. I'm a rusty trampoline
and you're three small children. I'll play in you
if you play in me, the beloved. We'll never leave
the odd one out. In the dim exterior of love
we'll never leave him. You know the cold and I
know the cold, friend. I'll give you my blood
if you give me your blood. We can circulate
the blood between us. We will live forever you and I,
like stars we'll live. I'll orbit you if you orbit me.
Have my ears I'll hear with your tongue.
I'll shine on you if you glow back at me.
You give me your scars and I'll take them.
Have my hotel room I'll sleep in your cage.
Friend, turn out the light. Friend, the light.

TOWER

Elisabeth Whitehead

once / I pointed to the violent core of shadow / I pointed to the hearts
as they stopped pace / mouths so full of cloud and gravel that they could
not speak / if clarity is the East / what name do we give to the cities
blown away (all but a tower) from a time when fire insisted / beveled and
locked into the back sky / first / a simple line of heat brimming over /
then a waving / in the plain- / river-water / heat held full in a cup of
wine (braided darkest in winter) / in bread / in hair reflected in glass
and the grasses / where the pails were leather and filled with water/ left
to a background of tack and electrical / where lost were the gloves and
the power of speech / then night / stilled / black as a machine / the
vessels of a heart pumping wood

TOWER

when winter and the fevers black / a circular snow draws tightly around the
outer city walls / with fur and skin and eiderdown falling from a height
seen in its / milk-can white ersatz- / sugar or a common salt / rifts in the
tower walls have been newly insulated / in armor—insects—graffiti and
hair / pulling a quick flush to the stone / while the grounds below remain
blank as an eggshell mask / held motionless on the face by one bronze
button in the mouth and two lines of taut string / where no one would
attempt the escape / where prints lift out loudly as ponds—wounds—a
moon (its linen skin) / with no path / and no guide until marked / a
turning / it will be smooth as upriver / not held to ransom / no lasting
addiction / where wolves (the color of rag-stone or of limestone) indented
and ribbed / will slope down to the possibility of word and water / roads
open out shiny as walnut wood / is this / running? is this like running?

ONE AND ONLY ONE

Mike Young

Okay, so you know how certain equations rule the world? One is the Von Karman Vortex: responsible for sand dunes and fingerprints.

The Congresswoman makes a surprise entrance except with less hair. A computer lab of Chinese teenagers chants the word *sunburn*. New ideas

don't seem so new after I imagine typing them into Google. Sprinters get faster by way of footprints in shapes the ground loves too much to

react against. Also, stripes on tropical fish: same old vortex. It's like math makes everything a toll bridge. One thing detectives should remember

is everyone can fit into shoes one size larger. Nervous detectives should repeat the key points of their retirement speech and imagine an audience

of clownfish. The mother whispers *a martyr ain't no leader*. One method for retrieving fingerprints is dip tiny memories of such as and such as sliding

headfirst into home plate, in an ethyl cyanoacrylate polymerisation solution. Booyah. Nostalgia is made of measurable acids. No two fingerprints are the same

except I just met a clone army of my friend Adam except
all with different swatches of chest hair. *What the eff,*
Mr. Wizard? An ICP fan explains the paint she needs

for the death corpse. A computer lab of Chinese teenagers
shares one candy bar, except it's a new kind made of
coffee and hazelnuts that you've never heard of because

I invented it just now while lying to your beautiful face.

FROM THE TRANQUILIZED TONGUE

Eric Baus

THE WOUNDED MIRAGE

The city's sickness nested in the mouth of the fountain. The blind hands removed a negative spleen. The detonated desert reset the savanna. The bad vowels were bled. The hills contracted. The malady halo remained.

*

THE KING'S SILHOUETTE

The body requested the scent of fox corpse added to the host.

*

THE MOLTING MOUTH

The word glass.
The word hand.
The word milk.
The word mirror.

*

THE ABDUCTED DICTIONARY

The tranquilized tongue renamed its aphasia.

*

THE EXHUMED ANTENNA

The sisters of the suspended flood split. The most devoted puma learned to swim. The sacrificial microphone swallowed its trail.

*

THE INVERTED URN

The parallel tenors trilled to atone for the séance's ellipses.

*

THE FLICKER'S SKIN

The somnolent.
The transparent.
The corporeal.

*

THE MIRROR'S SPORES

The sun crushed inside a prism corresponded with the x-ray of a chandelier.

*

THE DISSECTED BREATH

The alluvial flesh.
The bleeding wingprints.
The bowed heads.
The missing glyph.

*

THE COBRA'S POLLEN

The profane flora infused the sonar suspended in a single drop of ibis saliva.

*

THE INVISIBLE VOWELS

The river distilled blue sky from the bowels of swans. The coral roses crystallized in the mapmaker's chest. The ruptured harp annulled the endless ear.

*

THE ATROPHIED IRIS

The fisherman's prayers poisoned the armada's lenses.

*

THE PRISM'S NERVES

The phoneme's spiral skin.
The alchemist's driftwood.

*

THE DEMOLISHED FLOCK

The word moth followed the burning fleet home.

*

THE AMBUSHED BOOK

The encyclopedia of unwilling arrows.
The encyclopedia of injured silhouettes.
The encyclopedia of appropriated nerves.

*

THE POSTHUMOUS GLASS

The window appeared between the ambulance and an ant's shadow.

*

THE CORPOREAL CLIFF

The revolver's blast hoarded a handful of abdomen. The space opened onto the falls. The scenery's son implanted an ambush. The wounded boy became a corona.

TO SEA

Jocelyn Casey-Whiteman

I am a brilliant animal
but when the world unfurls
the black hallway

of its appetite, I shut myself
inside, inside
this self, a shock

of Russian Dolls shellacked and shelved
among the men who wear the winning suits.
Some hands

were so warm it took time
to feel them find my throat.
I have all these halves

to look after. They give people ideas.
My eyes, carved sharp and wide,
have had to multiply;

it's wild how much they see.
Dear Monsters, keep your Old Brain
games far from me.

I edge fire with heed.
Not for ash, nor smoke
but truth, a better way to breathe.

Inside me, something found has its beat.
I drive myself to sea.
I drive myself to sea.

WARTIME REPORT

After the bomb went off, the flowers grew differently. Please, have a seat. The children still play. The ones who pick the yellow flowers get ash on their fingers. They make fingerprint chains around each other's throats. Bees see the greater spectrum—the flowers a riot of ultraviolet light. Both the inside and outside become a target. I try to train my eyes to the surface: grass, tree, bird, but the sun strips the lake to sequins. I try to take people at their word though their actions blast their words to bits. This is the world we've made. There are patterns to see in the spectrum, and the flowers grow this way for a reason. Come closer, I think I've met you before.

HERD

Chris Tonelli

There's an energy
that remains
dormant
when there's no longer
an object of belief.

An effort.

A herd.

Sometimes, I
exercise.

(ARCHETYPE)

You imagine yourself
one archetype.
But probably not one
who does so;
each moment,
two myths.

Your job
is to prevent this.

AUDITION

Michael Anichini

I am

a cherished rainy

neighborhood sample

that screens suddenly,

seizes like breath

smearing muddy flowers

wrestling the sun.

A beard of clouds

A bowling ball sun

grazing the tracks the

abdominal vertices.

Trains that clank the

bridge-like ever.

Invisible eggs

frying nowhere.

I am selling sold vistas.

Flashcards that splatter.

The rug's eyelids shut.

A sky where no planet spins.

A planet without a sky.

POEM FOR TOM SANTIAGO

It has come to our attention that you have
been smoking illegal street drugs.
That you befriended us so you could
immediately unsubscribe from us.
That you saw us eating the frozen frozen waffle,
a new new low. That popular culture was created so that everyone
can feel smug and judgy about things.
That the last line of the essay you're writing
about social media and common mind is
there's the you that's being tortured
and the you that doesn't care,
always creating unto the next place,
making and excited and committed.
That overnight crop circles terrify you.
That we're the only thing that doesn't work perfectly
here because we're the only thing that thinks
we don't work perfectly here. That you
should let me have it in the afterlife.
It has come to our attention that you have been
spraying champagne, constantly going to hell,
and embodying the erosion of focus.
That there are creatures that are small with large eyes.
That flying off the stage and drifting
on the audience shaped your awareness,
now as a bubble blowing away, pop.
It has come to our attention that you are
buying a hundred used books at the concert
and stacking them into a chair for the lawn.

COAXING THE INQUISITIVE SOUL

When I come home from a day of work
which does not exist, just an illusion
with cycle of sleep, I am the future me
who is already deceased, my fears
catalogued in sardonic emails
to Giovanna Puttoli. Her responses
adorn my inbox with a salacious vibe while
suggesting a quest for both reason and meaning.
We met first at Welles Park,
glowering through a stretched scrap of green balloon.
The more she expanded the better
I could see her Frankenstein.
I was afraid of nothingness,
ceaseless consciousness,
and how we can't really have anything.
"You can't have anything at all," I told her.
"Go ahead and try if you like, it's already gone."
We discussed modern television design and such.
A folk troupe sauntered past our picnic blanket
urging us to make for California in song.
We imagined the military inspecting
the sparking appliances of our grandmothers.
We maneuvered on in sentiment
as fog settled over our budding village,
like ribbons of black and white
memories not our own.
Giovanna said she had died once,
and never conceded she didn't.
The secret to poetry is to pretend
you've never read it and then
to go on reading it forever.

MONEY

Emily Toder

what is money and why
is it waterproof

and how did money get to be
not even tangible

and who can know the weight
of the touchless money

money is hallucinated and the money
that is hallucinated changes lives

this money in the cloud I don't count
I don't think it counts

society is different from you
and me though

and in the world we're in
you and me

this remote money
is really decisive

and it casts a sick shade
on me and on some of you

and on some of you
it looks good

some money exists
and some money doesn't

and some people
throw the kind that does

in the wash and nothing
happens

and some of them hide in jewel boxes
what others hide in tires or waste

some like to brainstorm about money
they like to predict its agency

or guess the forms
its agency can take

but there is no consensus
money ruins and bedazzles everything all the time

and all the time people say
time is money but it's not

money's a pit and a yellow well
money gives love back an orange

it took away from love

money is metal and
a tiny high paper owl

money is blind
there is no way in the world

time is money
time is deaf

Steven Karl

Rage & in a day. The chocolate a nice surprise.

Even if only an after-thought. The fight something bullish.

Spilled beet juice. Flip-flops & no beach in sight.

Leave the drink. Take the umbrella.

If there's a flood. Negative noon & a watch set

To wrong weather. Keep an eye out for updates.

Read all the directions. You'll grow bored waiting for bread to rise.

But the fun happens only if caution

Is given to the wind. The tops of palm trees.

Water clogging the ears. Nautical is in & you're the cutest.

Put the hammer down. Stop pestering the walls.

WINTER OF THE EXTERIOR

Nathan Hoks

Once I had nothing but a fawn that came nightly to my window, bowed her head and nibbled at the pistachio nuts I'd scatter on the ground. We had a silent understanding: every moment spent gazing in each other's eyes was a long voyage at sea. When winter came my knees began to ache. I dreamt I was water freezing and melting back and forth. There were no nights. Hopeless laughter sounded from the forest, a gray-bearded man came to drink from me. His eyes were the fawn's and when I finally awoke, birds were flying back and forth outside the window. The falling snow gave off a heavy blue light. I could not lift my legs. The sun rose. The snow rose.

DARWIN IN THE GALAPAGOS

Ciaran Berry

Eden, if he'd allow himself the word,
or at least a place where we seem to be
brought close to the first appearance
of new beings on this earth. Consider
the mocking thrush. Consider the wren.
Consider the turtle—a small skiff surfacing
on the inlet where his crewmen wish
to swim. Of the sea fish, fifteen kinds,
and of land shells, sixteen. All the beetles
(twenty five species) he'll cup like gold
in his prospector palms. And what it is
his mind begins to grow into, thinking
of all this might mean, while his gaze
goes greedy, a sailor in search of food
who takes delight in knocking down
small birds. Consider the lizards that go
in herds a-fishing, how they're black
as ash spat out by the volcanic rock's
cyclopean eye. He pulls their tails
and pitches one into the hungry waves
only to see it crawl back to his feet. Does
he wonder, I wonder, what this says
of us? This act we read as reckless
trust? A gun here is almost superfluous,
he admits. A bird in the bush will be
a bird in hand. Being what we are,
how could we not take this as cue
to draw the blade? To pin the feathers

to a piece of card? Consider, if you will,
the tortoise, how you can drink the water
from its slit bladder, or prepare an oil
clear as water from its fat. How, if
you climb onto its back, give a few
raps to the hind parts of the shell,
it rises up, begins to walk away. Riding
along, does our failed clergyman
think god or glory? Does his mind open
skywards that way at all? Even as it
burrows deeper into the minutiae: footprint
and feather, scat and seed and scale?

GOD'S BELL HAS NO PLACE HERE

Leslie Anne Mcilroy

Put down your prayer face and pick up a harmonica. Devotion is still in the sink where you left the dog's bone washed of marrow, unable to throw an animal's limb in the trash like tin foil — even that, a hard gesture. So much earth and ruin in this tiny kitchen of yours, the cigarette butts wrapped in suffocating plastic, the yes almost lost in the soup, tangled in the spoiled mung beans, rotting and rotting and almost so soft they could make a meal for your dying mouth. Someone has hope and it is not brass or metal or even song. Instead it is the grief you hear, pouring yourself into this night's bed, where you dream the girl leaving to follow some heavenly, sonorous thunder, her voice a trolley, the only music a wheel churning, the only melody the next stop and the next.

STORY IN TWO PARTS

Daniel Poppick

1. *Brothers in a Riptide*

The brothers were in a riptide. Then they were under it. They remained brothers. Then they were around.

2. *A Volcano Extends a Vacation*

The sisters were most fond of one another when they were in a hotel. They rode the elevator together and took pictures of one another standing under the lobby's chandelier. When they went to the colonial village they shared popcorn and openly mocked the men in white wigs. When they went to the amusement park and rode the rollercoaster one sister would sit in the very front and the other at the end, and at a prearranged point in the ride the one in the front would toss a penny into the air for the other to catch on descent. It never worked and several guests were nicked in the face, but the sisters just laughed and held hands and split the cost of the photograph.

One sister said, "I feel as if we have always been sisters." The other sister said, "I feel as if we have been through a terrible ordeal." The first sister said, "And yet I feel as if that is over." The second sister said, "Yes."

They flew home together. During the flight the first sister opened a bag of peanuts. The second sister said, "That is mine."

The first sister looked out the window. Below the plane was a volcano. Beyond that was the sea. She looked at the photograph on the tray next to the peanuts. She looked at her sister. "No it is not."

FAREWELL SPIT

When the noise star tips its cup of fuel
And spills a wax on all but opera, opera houses
Cracks where light blurred
Alert the nearest stranger that the grief I did
Not feel in days is a bumper
Crop compared
To my present frame incorporating him slash her
Into its grain and the tonic
Enkindled in that relic your bone china is
More myriad than phones. This lotion is like honey
Though it smarts the hands.
Say it plain as furniture
You would torch to power an engine
Not yet invented across a sound to
To to to to to, and you will
Know the chandelier
Your hands raised where I could
See 'em, okay guns,
Switched on long before I grieved by the light of the pop
You fed me, for I am in love
With you with him slash her if you
Two have guns okay being holy,
Agents of relation eschewing strings and horns and air as
Ardently as metal.
For the heart enlists in that greenery's force
With its ashes charging
To opposite ends of a showtune
Not coming remotely
Close to being splashed by our camp's fountain. The
Heart? My apologies for the the the the

Though know I rarely mean my own.
I shall get into the good metal.
I shall phantom this piece with the music of.

SUN CAN'T SET

James Shea

We had considered what
was said, and how long
it had never been heard.
Now, when we're beyond
credulity, can we insist
on knowing what is true.
Would that I were believed,
shadowed by others to see
which beliefs were mine.

The walk of a stranger,
movements of the earth
are no longer believable.
It's the act that matters:
less the hydrant, red solid,
quiet with water, more
the belief in believing,
the faith we have even
in reason, a partial tree.

DARK PASSAGE

From a high window, she jumped
looking back just before she hit
the ground, thinking I almost hit
the ground just before she hit it.

THE LORD BE WITH YOU BUT NOT ALSO WITH YOU

Quan Barry

The liturgy has changed (“& with
your spirit”) but paradise is still
paradise
though Adam & his leggy moll
beg to differ on their way out of
paradise.

When he came to pick me up in
his 1974 Dodge Dart, I knew it
would never last.
Hanging from the rearview
mirror: a fuzzy
pair of dice.

In the comments section
“Illusiog” says he can’t find
good bacon & liquid smoke
won’t do. “VulturE” suggests:
“substitute sun-dried portabellos
pared & diced.”

According to the TV news
magazine that airs every third
night teflon is the
bird killer. Heat your pan above
400°F & in the next room your
parrot dies.

The first time I saw her was in
the tabloids at Circular Quay,
her perfect breasts sporting
a black bar. *Meet Johnny Depp's
new lady love: Vanessa
Paradis.*

It's disarming in every way. The
hair like a pelt, as if he has
grown the Bat-signal on his face.
& the worst part about it? The
vanity. Detective Hercule
Poirot dyes.

When I got my Latin test back,
she had circled it in red.
"Impossible," she wrote. It made
perfect sense to me. For 6 days
of labor, God gives us the 7th.
Per dies.

That first minute in the MRI,
heart clenched like a fist. Lady-
bug, I say to myself, remem-
ber the tunnels at Cu Chi, the
underground city in Derinkuyu—
to Paradise!

RADICAL

Maureen Seaton

What do I know of a band named Bomb
or an armed hitchhiker on Route 66?

Form often follows substance or else
it holds it up to a light that flickers

when you tap it. Stop tapping, okay?
You look nothing like my father, who died

last April, although he's formless now
as jello or paint or war, a holy

mass of arteries and calcified
chakras. I've got a few tricks (smoke and

mirror) up the sleeve of this shifty coat
of arms we live beneath: our film de guerre.

Of all the masked faces I've seen, yours
takes the trophy for nightlight maneuvers

now that you're lobbing potatoes (I say)
or tomatoes (you say), trading salvation

for love. Pick a savior. Can't? I could never
sleep with a terrorist. I'd rather hike

the entire length of the Rockies or skip
baths like they did in the old days. Still

there's something gorgeous in your minefield.
I adore the way your face produces fractals.

THE _____ EXPERIENCE

Matt Reeck

The word “experience” was the keyword in this massive repackaging of life. It forced the word “reality” into usage notes in dictionaries. No longer was commerce based upon the exchange of goods and services so much as the sale of consciousness. Life and the Life Experience were separate and yet inseparable; the Life Experience was the patent all companies vied for, the license perpetually bogged down in court. In hindsight, the lives of their parents began to appear full of slack meaninglessness. The new experience consumers did not deny that their parents loved in some form or fashion, but it was now obvious that they never took advantage of the potential of experience. Their parents’ love appeared wantonly animalistic, pointless, not commercial at all. The Death Experience was also highly popular: death as moksha; death as biological recycling; death as a vindication of family. Each company marketed death. No one could stand to simply die. Each purchased their Death Experience as teenagers, then waited to receive its promised kiss.

THE PEDAGOGY OF THE CITY

But no, he said. This would not do. The city would be his. He would never leave the city. The planned walls of the city, its bridges and suburban highway's arc would be the limit he would never exceed. He would develop his own curriculum. He would not submit to the censors. He would ration himself into apothegms while walking in the park. They will not find me there, he thought. He would remain beyond. This was his sort of advocacy, that they would not find his hands. His hands were busy enough with what he needed of them. If he remained, it would be difficult to manage, with the Syndicate's agents pausing in the doorways of apartments, sheltering from the rain. The scope was unknown. It would generate and regenerate. It would expand in insolent quietness. He would be within it but unseen. His shelter would be that of the unseen.

THE NEW IDEA

The Syndicate was to release the new idea. Every person was to create a micro-idea that the Syndicate would collect and process to form the new idea. This partial practice gave each person the sense that they had individually contributed to the new idea though there was no feedback loop to allow anyone to know if their micro-idea had mattered at all. The process was alchemical and so transformation was expected. Each would begin to see hints, or micro-hints, of their thinking in the idea and this would lead them once again to pledges of allegiance to the Syndicate. And this happened every new year.

CHICAGO

Dave Snyder

The wood thrush nested
among the liquor store bags on my roof.

Later, a cowbird added a brown-flecked egg
to the bottle green ones there.

Neighbor kids are karate chopping and singing
Elk! Elk! Beautiful Elk!

That night, we were beaned by some falling guttering
just as we were saying *individual misfortunes create*
general welfare and *all is well*.

The thrush chicks starved. The nest caught fire.

CHICAGO

Dead bees are piling-up in front of the hive on my roof.

When I kissed the woman downstairs
she wouldn't speak to me
and now all these damned bees to sweep-up.

It's that time of year again: Dead Bee Time.
Everything Eventually Time.

Summer contains pleasure and idleness for drones.
In autumn, the females kill any remaining. It's best.

In one theory, time does exist
but it is directionless.

Workers unkillling drones.
Un-re-pollinating, giving nectar back
into the lindens, un-take,
re-give again.

And brief sweet. It starts ending. Starts,
Fine.
Fine.

THE CASE FOR PERIPHERAL VISION

Michael Metivier

Because there's so much good stuff

In the marginalia.

I once thought I saw a massasauga

But it took some reflection

Before I understood why,

For instance

that was really a milksnake

on the flinty outcrop

The codes and crosses

Of Batesian mimicry,

Eons of contextual scurf,

That revealed the harmlessness

Staring sidelong at me.

woven through

heaths and leaf-strewn tuff,

and not my own death

MOON

The moon is in storybook phase,
Side-profile with her nose
Looking up and to the left
As a solitary goose
Bleats distant and soft.
She makes me want to face
The same direction and confess
Like a younger brother all the ways
I've tried to see the world for what it is
And failed, a tuft
Of northbound down, easy to miss.

FROM INLANDERS

Jesse Lichtenstein

I know a little about hats—
a lot about shoes—my
strong points are my elbows—
if it's bright it's a beacon—
I'm the one who finds things
beautiful in waste bins—
I'm the encounterer—

At the dentist
an x-ray of my mouth
is a child's mouth—I know
this girl—she is watching
fireworks explode over a
city on a great river—
she is watching crowds
on the esplanade—they are
not cheering—they are not
speaking—some favor has
been driven from them

We count our steps—
eighty-seven, eighty-eight—
the air follows us out, follows
us in—let's keep quiet now—
if we say one word
the trees will die

The ocean is a story told
to children who have
only their eyelids left—
tonight I will tell you
about the ocean—how it
never even happened

A CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTIAN HAWKEY

In January 2013 Christian Hawkey and Dara Wier spoke by Skype. Hawkey, along with Rob Casper, Michael Teig and Kelly LeFave, dreamed up *jubilat* in 2000. Hawkey requested a word-for-sound transcription of his and Wier's conversation; the resulting transcript has been minimally edited by Hawkey and Wier, with any textual additions demarcated by a smaller font.

Christian Hawkey's latest books are the cross-genre book *Ventrakl* and *Sonne from Ort*, a collaborative bilingual erasure made with the German poet Uljana Wolf. He translates contemporary German poetry, as well as the late short prose of the Austrian writer Ilse Aichinger. He is an officer of the Office of Recuperative Strategies.

Dara Wier (the one in *italics*, for *jubilat*)'s new book is *You Good Thing*.

So, I clicked on video to call you I don't know if you ha
if you have video, I think it might even be easier to talk
without video but um, but we have it if we want it. *Okay.*

It's a little weird though because I, since
my laptop is connected to another flatscreen
I have two screens, so in order to look at the screen to see you
I have to look away from you.

[laughter] Which is—*Seems normal*—
the basic structure of subjectivity. *True enough.*
But I can't see you. You cannot. Oh, but I can't see you.

I know. [laughter] *So anyways, being a new father
& having a family it's a pretty um um dramatic thing.*
It's kind of like uh having one's mind blown. *Yeah.*

Every second. But I seem to remember, are you anti-babies? Do you have an anti-baby streak?

Not since I had one. Why do you say that?

I don't know, I remember being around people who had just had babies & I became very anti-baby because of their constant talk about babies.

You hadn't yet had a baby. Yeah. Once you've had one you understand you don't have to talk baby talk. They're happy enough for you to talk anything to them. I fell in love the instant I saw my first baby's face. & then again when I saw the second one. I had no choice, & didn't want a choice. I succumbed. Before that I hadn't had any or much interest in babies. But I wouldn't have said I was anti-baby.

I guess I ask because because I have a book that's uh um well by Lee Edelman called *No Future*.

Basically it's a critique of the way children are posited within social & especially political culture as the reason that we have to "do something," i.e. we have to "do this for our children." "I believe that children are our future," sings Whitney Houston. What's really being supported here is a kind of compulsory heteronormative familial social order & so he has the provocative thesis of saying, you know actually um if the future is always being bargained away via this kind of rhetoric—if we're always holding this idea of children being the future as um our ethical demand or limit or um even the definition of the future & & at the same time while we um at the same time do so little to pay attention to or care for the present, then h h how would, what would a future be in which children were not figured this way? What would

it mean to repurpose the homophobic cliché
that homosexuality is anti-reproduction, & therefore anti-future,
so that queerness maintains a common force of resistance
& refusal. & so I am “a father” but I can also refuse
the way this role is figured in our social order, just as I hope
any child will refuse to act in ways that are
expected of them—refuse to be disciplined, figured, named.

*I was reading a biography this past week
& everything in the biography’s pretty much so-&-so
wrote like this because his mother was like
this, so-&-so thought like this because his father was like this
& so on. Everything about the writer’s writing
& thinking were biographically interpreted. Whatever
the parents did or were caused the son, in this case,
to do what he did or thought & eventually wrote. It was obnoxious
that somebody thought that things were that cut & dry.*

*I did think, when I was reading this book, cause
it was so overwhelmingly about that, why don’t people
ever talk about what babies or children do to parents? Yeah.*

*You know? I mean you’re as affected by a child
as you affect a child. What makes it all such a one-way street
when people write about these things? Yeah.*

For some reason I think of the horror genre. When a child
or infant is represented with agency, as affecting
the world, uh it’s usually because they’re possessed
[laughter]. *I want to ask you some straightforward questions,*

*OK? In Ventrakl’s introduction you talk about
shooting Trakl’s book from ten feet away
with a twelve gauge shotgun. Where’d you do that?*

I was writing that intro at Anna Moschovakis’ house
in upstate New York, in the country. I was trying to navigate a line
which runs thru the whole book between between

fiction & reality, & between a kind of um
 overly serious & um playful tone. I mean,
 quoting Arnold Schwarzenegger for example—*Yeah*
 —but also including absurdist hyperbole, such as that
 I'd actually shot a Trakl book. I was poking fun
 at myself. To me it was such a willfully over-exaggerated um thing
 to to write but at the at the same time it it was
 also illustrative of one of the things that
 I'm kind of playing with in the book which is just uh
 maybe the structure of, I'm not sure how to describe this,
 the structure of melancholy. One kind of melancholy
 is constituted by an inability to mourn & uh & an an
 inability to mourn for example within public space.
 & when that ability to mourn is
 foreclosed, the um, it becomes internalized,
 & when it becomes internalized it uh uh
 at least from a a Freudian or Lacanian point of view, it
 um it ends up amplifying the superego, it ends up
 moving toward aggression & violence
 or masochism. I was also playing with this idea
 of being “shot through” with um other other media
 & the kind of daily violence of the Bush years,
 the Iraq & Afghanistan wars, which were
 all the more violent because the violence & the bodies
 were censored. Also I think of how the translating self slash
 the writing self is um is you know occupies some kind of
 porous space, a mediated space, or becomes media.
 I wanted to complicate things
 further, to complicate the form & authority of a preface by allowing
 contrasting rhetorics to coexist, self-mockery & seriousness,
 faux seriousness & genuine statement, philosophical inquiry
 & Schwarzenegger. I was happy that Marjorie Perloff

in her review, called the preface a kind of prose poem.
 That seems right. I also think that for language
 to move towards poetry
 it has to move toward performativity, which means some kind of
 breakage or slippage
 needs to occur, not just
 in tone, & perhaps with the preface I should have done that.
When I saw Schwarzenegger appear
& other aspects of what you call a hyperbolic edge
a lot of what you're saying went flying through my mind.
But I've shot a twelve gauge shotgun
& if you shoot something from ten feet away
there's nothing left. So I took the image as an almost
cartoon blast. Yeah, cartoonish is a good word
 for it, because that ties into kitsch. I was giving a talk at Harvard
 & reading from the book, & someone asked whether the
 placement of Trakl's own final WWI poem "Groddek"
 as the final poem in *Ventrakl* was in danger of being too much of a
 Hollywood ending, too kitschy. & it is—intentionally.
 Trakl's poem is an over-the-top affect-soaked
 but entirely indirect & incredibly imaginative (&
 therefore truly compassionate) exploration
 of the logic & violence of warfare, subjects
 normally excluded from our media, & even from poetry
 that traffics in a kind of
 compulsory happiness or jokiness, which in turn
 I wanted to push against, distort, using a
 German-English sonic distortion pedal. I'm interested
 in kitsch; it's only generated by our attempt to
 avoid it! Daniel Tiffany, in his forthcoming critical book
My Silver Planet: A Genealogy of Poetry & Kitsch
 writes: "Only the homeopathic logic of kitsch, forswearing

false immunity to the libidinal currents
 of the marketplace, can place into circulation certain kinds of
 artistic time-bombs, snare pictures, stealth weapons.”
Okay. So I’d like to talk about reading. For instance
reading Ventrakl feels very much like an experiment
in letting something happen to you. You start with something
& you let it happen. You let it direct you—Mmm hmm—
you let it create emotional terrains, you let it create
intellectual problems, all you know (& all I know) is that something is going
to happen. Reading sometimes sounds like
it’s a very simple matter of taking what you see on the page
& taking it into your brain & letting
whatever’s in your brain do something
with what you took in. It’s not so simple, it’s deceptively simple.
You, meaning, anyone, make it into a drama.
 I I like what you said, “turning it into a drama”
 because I think that turning is performative & um so I
 was allowing the writing to loop back into the reading
 & the reading of the book into the writing, so it becomes
 a kind of performance of uh, of
 the very process you describe. A second thing
 that’s related, which is the role of performance
 in relation to the body & the role of reading maybe
 in relation to the body & also maybe
 the role of translation in relation to the body, performance, &
 reading. So I mean that’s that’s a lot
 but in the act of transwriting the body & act
 intersect, you become a conduit, a revenant, a channeler,
 not in a uh, easy religious sense, but in the sense of
 mediation & circuitry & a kind of tuning. There is
 something ambient & ecological about it. Writing that sees itself as
 a kind of poetics of translation does this, & reading

from the position of a translator does this. Here I want to
 include what Lisa Samuels & Jerome McGann
 call “deformance,” a way of engaging texts that involves
 alternative hermeneutical modes, such as reading backwards, erasure,
 rearranging a text, de- & re-forming it.
 I include all this under the rubric of translation
 in part because translation always affirms
 the world with the world—that there
 is no original text, no one text, or one way of reading
 a text, & also no one way to translate or write or re-write
 a text—to create what someone called, I forget who,
 a “second-original.” & it’s about politics also.
 A political space is opened up to think & read this way
 if we define the political as that which disrupts
 expected norms, the “police order,” & also if we see not just another language
 as belonging to others but also our own language as always
 belonging to others. Spivak says that in translation meaning frays
 when it jumps between languages—I was thinking also that meaning
 frays when it jumps between media—& that the translator’s task
 is to foster this fraying, to love it. Spivak defines this fraying as a kind of love
 & I love that. So um you know all all this. *I was reading Nabokov’s*
Speak, Memory & I was struck by what he writes
when he’s talking about the first time he ever felt like
writing a poem. I think he was about fourteen or fifteen.
After describing a splendid sunset he says, “I did not know
then as I know perfectly well now what to do
with such things, how to get rid of them, how to transform them
into something that can be turned over to the reader
in printed characters to have him cope
with the blessed shiver . . .” It’s a romantic, melodramatic passage
but I was wondering if you had any kind of response
to that at all. I think Nabakov realizes that he hadn’t realized then

*that what he would do when he would write later is
transform things into something that could be given away—
Mmm hmm—instead of writing for himself. Which is important too.*
It's a moment when he's stepping out of a closed order
& recognizing that—Yes—someone else exists
& that poems can affect other people but can also simply be given
to other people. *Given, that's a very important part of that.*
But isn't it also that he's constituting himself
as reader at the same time? *Right.* It's a little strange
to think about writing as, I don't know, encoding things
you then give to other people to have to deal with.
There's a problematic set of things that I I guess I want
to resist. Something about the "get rid of" & asking others to "cope"
with one's experience, however transformed by art
bothers me. It strikes me as a kind of narcissism, where
the other, or the reader, is used simply to confirm the self.
I'd want to ask, with Foucault, who is speaking
here & what historical frameworks & discourses are at work
in generating this idea of authorship? *I can understand
why you'd say that. But I don't think that's so much
what he's intending, I hope it's not. Knowing his work
I doubt it. I think more along the lines of it's a realization
that these things are not so much yours, it's not a
personal ownership situation. Another thing
I was thinking about is a concept called apophenia,
a condition in which a person is apt to make
too many connections. [laughter] I love
that there's a name for that. Yeah, I feel as if I I
know people like that. I think it's called—I think it's technically called
the unmotivated scene of connections. I don't even know
what that means. I haven't thought about that
nearly enough. I was just shocked by the idea*

there could ever be too many connections. Ha.
 I immediately connect to Google & social networking
 as apophenian spaces, the illusion in some way
 that now we're all connected. *Apophenitian!*
I like thinking that someplace somewhere there's someone
who knows when you've made too many
connections, who knows when the limit of connections
has been reached. The um, this this I do
 find myself interested in certain writers who seem to have
 that problem—who by virtue of an endless attempt
 to make too many connections end up making no sense
 at all. I am thinking of someone like Jean-Pierre Brisseret.
 He was this uh late 19th-century outsider writer
 who developed this um this this theory that human human
 speech & language is is uh descended from frogs.
 Very French. He would take a word & then he would just sort of spin
 out associations or connections on a sonic, uh
 sound level, so basically he would create these
 fictional etymologies based ah only on sound, not
 meaning, not on um uh uh you know say um
 word origin or word roots until he finally arrived
 sonically at word roots that sounded close to a a a frog's croak.
When I run into something new to me, associational logic
of either sound or sense or the look
of the words on the page
definitely affect what I'm thinking. I'm always disappointed
if the associations only last for a note or two.
I always think, why can't you go on? I mean you started this.
 Yes, keep going. Absolutely. Follow the digression all the way.
 He he also developed um & wrote a book on swimming
 & developed a swimming technique that was built around
 mimicking the movement of frogs in water. *Yeah. [laughter].*

So, *what are you working on now?* A bunch of things.
 I just did a Skype interview with Maria D'Almada, a Lisbon-based artist
 political activist & teacher whose project
 is called *Recuperarte*. *As in recuperative poetics?*
 Yeah, I'm interviewing her for the Office of Recuperative Strategies.
 She is someone um I mean it's sort of a long story
 but Uljana was working with a a really great German poet
 named Barbara Köhler, & Barbara had just been to Lisbon
 where she uh passed by & photographed a wall
 um uh a wall of fake tiles—you know um
 it's a city famous for its tiles, its porcelain tiles.
 There's something very beautiful about you know
 just basically a city where public space is
 filled up with art. Now the tiles are being stolen
 they're being ripped off, um uh they're being taken
 by thieves & resold on the black market
 & so what uh Maria did was that she she goes around
 & she finds um tiles um that have been you know stolen
 & where there are only a few tiles left on a particular wall
 then she makes um a photograph of it & then she makes um
 a stencil of the pattern on that tile
 & then she goes back to that um same wall
 & she stencils the pattern of that tile
 on the empty wall, so suddenly you'll be looking at
 a wall with a handful of tiles left
 & then off to the right they'll be this kind of blossoming um array of
 graffiti tiles
 the same pattern as the original tiles.
 I was interested that someone was um—you know
 the tiles themselves are a form of public art
 & someone was then using public street art to uh reclaim lost public
 space.

There's the idea of something ghost-like here. & here the remnant or trace of it will predict its future. Yeah. When the tiles er are stolen, then they're often sold um at at flea markets for tourists & so she said she actually started this whole project by going to some of the tables where people are are selling the stolen tiles
 uh
 & uh standing next to the table
 & then immediately telling anyone who comes up to the table not to buy stolen tiles—much to the fury of the people trying to sell them. She began by making a direct intervention. Dara, what are you working on now? *Um you know what I don't know what I'm working on right now. (Here I'm definitely not telling the whole truth) I feel as if I'm skimming the surface of something (maybe like a stone). Putting words down a few phrases, a few little bits of this & that & I don't know what (I have to wait & see what) I'm going to do with it or what I want to do with it yet (yet & not yet, wait, stall, linger).*
& uh there's a freedom in this that I like. I have three books sitting on my desk that need to be edited but I don't think of that as what I'm doing right now. What that is is work I have to do to recover something that's sitting there waiting for me to deal with it. A book of poems, book of stories, a kind of novel in verse. One of the um ways you've always occupied a kind of imaginary for me, is that you're doing the work of poetry in multiple spaces & modes & social spaces, community spaces, & also pedagogy. So um not just or not only the production of books, poems. That's been a model for me in what we're trying to do with the Office of Recuperative Strategies & with um uh also my teaching & my translating, I want

a sense of authorship & agency that is large
 & generous & relational & involves numerous modes
 of distribution & activity. “Activity is the only community”
 writes Leslie Scalapino. Being a parent also makes me aware
 of how much support we need & are given when we enter the world
 & I also want a model of authorship that recognizes this—that
 acknowledges in the writing the support received that allows one the privilege
 to write. & again (Edelman), there should be an ethics
 that figures this beyond & outside
 the experience of being a parent. & the the the one space
 where I often struggle is teaching. Occasionally
 I’ve tried to erase the border between my creative life
 & my teaching life, for example trying to integrate the classroom
 into what I’m doing, & it often
 ends up not working. *I really do think it has to do with who’s*
in the room. That sounds simplistic & I guess it is.
One doesn’t know the mix of personalities
& characters & experience & ambition & desire
that’s going to wind up in any certain one room, interacting with one
another. I think if I start out with an idea for a class that’s big & vague
& maybe a little scary I do better, you know? I did one recently
that loosely had Chance as its centerpiece & it worked
because each person brought into the room a different idea
about of what they thought about chance. If I over-define or if
because of my enthusiasm over determine what I happen to be interested in
I close off too many escape hatches for us.
Not so good. Maybe one aspect of good teaching is is
 actually to um create the conditions in or under which
 students can um unfold as equals. Too often
 what happens in a classroom kind of uh mirrors or reflects
 uh larger institutional structures so the desire is to push
 against that & to create some other frame

in which discovery can take place among equals. Or
 just having say a seminar at at your house, which you often do
 rather than in a classroom where all the desks
 are turned a certain way, all the chairs
 are turned a certain way, where the room
 is always a rectangle, with a chalkboard or dry erase board
 at one end, you know um uh institutional settings
 which even on the level of architecture
 reinforce certain frames that suggest that a given student
 defer agency. *I noticed on the OoRS website site that Rachel [Rachel*
Levitsky, co-founder of OoRS] teamed up with an architect
to go to the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn. Yeah
 that gets back to this idea of one's body
 being both media & a kind of detour. For um uh for that
 Gowanus project Rachel came up with this notion of
 remediating the pollution & um reingesting or reingesturing
 the the the Gowanus canal, of taking in the pollution
 so that your body becomes the site
 upon which you then remediate something that's contaminated
 & to me that seems like actually a beautiful way to think about
 maybe what writing is or what culture can be
 maybe & what what poems can do in some way
 I I don't know, I think what they did also was that they went & um
 walked around
 the neighborhood & collected language uh uh & & raw material
 from signs & candy wrappers & uh garbage & receipts
 on the ground, & then they brought all this back, all the objects
 & detritus & discarded things along the canal
 & uh created a kind of performative text out of this so that it was also
 um local. The Gowanus project
 was partly inspired by by David Buuk's work
 on Treasure Island, a small island that used to be a military base

uh in the San Francisco Bay & was then shut down uh
& not used & because it had been used as a kind of test site
for bombs um so the ground on this island is polluted & yet now
it's being developed & you know condominiums
are being put up et cetera & so he did a performance
where uh he among other things he had to eat the um eat the dirt.

*Well there's a great tradition of people eating dirt.
You know, especially (particularly a) pregnant woman
will have people send dirt from where she's from
so that she can eat some of that dirt during her pregnancy.*
Oh, talk more about this. *It's called pica. A woman's pregnant,
she tells her mother, her sister, her aunts
that she needs some dirt from where she's from. I wonder
would it be another story if we were calling it earth? Ha. Yeah*
but that sounds, you know uh. I was talking with CA Conrad
about all this a while back. *I remember CA
eating some dirt from nearby a tree at Emily Dickinson's house
when he visited here a couple of years ago. I think ingesting
& eating are a big part of the somatic life
I would expect. Absolutely. I'm pretty excited & moved by just
breathing. You know taking in a whole lot of air.*
(thanks, Christian, jubilat thanks you)
Thanks, Dara, thanks to you.

AN ATTEMPT AT EXHAUSTING A PLACE IN BERLIN

Christian Hawkey

Over a three-day weekend in the fall of 1974 the French writer Georges Perec (1936-1982) sat down in a local Parisian square, place Saint-Sulpice, and wrote down—recorded, transcribed—everything he saw, often moving around the square and writing from various locations. The resulting book, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, was published in 1975. In his brief preface Perec writes this his intention was to describe “that which is generally not taken note of, that which is not noticed, that which has no importance.” This is a good definition of what Perec named “the infraordinary.”

Nearly 40 years later, on the same three-day weekend, an international group of poets were invited to chose a location in their given city or town and re-enact Perec’s performance. I was living in Berlin with my partner, the German poet Uljana Wolf, and we had just welcomed a daughter into the world; the three-day weekend for the performance coincided with a translation workshop that she was required to attend, and so I resolved to re-perform the Perec with Marlena, or M, as she is known below, and I further resolved to ask friends and family to join me, hang out, care for M while I write, or write with me, read. This text is for those who came to lend support, company, and conversation.

Friday, October 19th, 2012
Cafe Wohnzimmer
Helmholtzplatz, Berlin, Germany
13:05 pm.
Weather: clear sky, blue.
19° Celsius.

Cigarette smoke from table to left rises straight up, which is good, since M is with me, sleeping on my chest in the “Ergo.” Therefore she is sleeping. Dynamically. No wind.

Small fist-pushes, kneading nearly, on chest. She wakes. Can’t stand still—have to walk, move, even if I just walk in place.

Walking in place w/infant on chest, writing.

sun
blue sky
left of sun, contrail of airplane, dispersing
trees
treetops
oaks
poplars
leaves changing, yellow, bright-yellow, orange, intense orange, molten.

I should note that I am wearing sunglasses.

I should note that I am also color blind.

M wakes. Not fooled by walking in place—no forward motion.

Babies know when you are trying to trick them.

Babies know when you are even thinking about trying to trick them.

13:15.

M's out again: increased head-weight against chest.

Sleeping our bodies become bodies.

13:16

I thought M was out. Wrong. More pacing.

Buildings on other side of park, seen between trees, above trees, rooftops,
and figures on the balconies, smoking.

German balconies: ashtrays.

All the buildings have windows with crucifix-shaped muntins.

To write alongside Perec in Germany. I think about this. His parents.
Mother.

13:26

M sleeps. Will try to move her from therefore to stroller. She starts to
squirm and wake precisely when I start writing that.

13:27

I need coffee. U calls to check in. M seems to hear her wireless voice

in the atmosphere and cries out, sharply, twice, on my chest, or rather directly into it.

13:28

Close up: foreground: small black Claire Fontaine notebook, which I'm writing in. It's the name of a fake artist, the artist Claire Fontaine, a group of artists who took the name of a French brand of stationery and make work under that name.

A readymade artist.

A readymade writer.

Already I find it impossible to write only what one sees, to exclude back-story, digressions, feeling, affect. I'm here with my seven-week-old daughter because U is participating in a translation workshop all day during each of the next three days. The French poet Philippe Beck was in Berlin last week reading and afterwards he spoke of the importance of objectivity, of a "dry lyricism." As opposed to what? Wet lyricism? The typical male fantasy of the intact body w/o leakage, porosity, drool. Marinetti. The fantasy of the rational body. Of the cold hard impermeable metallic male body.

My pen. It's says "Citi" on one side, in white. No escape.

M's head, the top of it, the soft fontanel, brown hair streaming forward. She moans angrily as I write this, as if resisting my gaze.

Important skill.

To my right, some kind of vine, or a group of small birch trees in a large wooden planter, marking the end of the cafe tables. I'm standing and

writing and so my head is half in the leaves. I see a bird's nest inside, among the thin branches. My head is really inside the leaves now, the tree. MAN WITH BABY ON CHEST STICKS HEAD INSIDE CROWN OF POTTED TREE. Must be a fake nest; it came with the store-bought dwarf birches, or whatever they are. But the bird has woven several interesting items into its nest.

- 1) A clear plastic dime bag or square wrapper; maybe a gumball wrapper.
- 2) A slip of paper, eaten through with holes—I tilt my head and can make out the black letters BVG against a yellow square. It's a tram ticket.
- 3) A piece of tissue paper.
- 4) A thin yellow thread.
- 5) More clear plastic, thin strips, tattered and dirty.

I take this last detail as proof that this is the work of a bird since no human would construct a fake nest using garbage from the street.

No eggs.

A ladybug lands on M's head. Pale orange. Almost tan. Just as it departs, M grunts.

I am writing furiously, before M needs attention, support.

A silver car parked on the street in front of café. A silver car parked behind it. A red car behind the silver car. A silver car behind the silver car. A blue car behind the silver car. A red car behind the blue car. A green car behind the blue car. A blue car behind the silver car. A silver car behind the silver car.

No white cars.

No bird in nest.

The street—large flat square granite stones. These are the stones I broke my wrist on, riding my bicycle in 2008. I stopped at an intersection and forgot my feet were locked in toe clips. Memory: the three-second panicked brain-short-circuiting foot-struggle in the air—vertical on a bike, without forward motion—before thundering over sideways, onto the stones, my right hand stretched out to break the fall. The light changed. Pedestrians crossed, looking down at me on the ground. No one stopped.

M is squirming, kicking, small grunts, stretches.
The pacifier pops out, half-way.
I sort of jut my chest out which pops it back in.
We work together.

Citi is running out of ink.

M back in stroller.

A small black and very fat bird arrives in the miniature grove of potted trees! It alights on a branch above M. The stroller top is up.

Person sitting on a bench across the street, in Helmholtzplatz, their back is to us. White letters on back of bench, graffiti: P O K E. Then, under it, on another slat of wood, the same letters, p o k e, but thinner, smaller, a chalk-like script.

A blue “Einbahnstrasse” sign, half covered over by a shrub. Shrub. That seems like a German word. One way street. Benjamin. All the parks here are left to grow, all summer, unmanicured, uncut, I picture Central Park with thigh-high grass, the idea of nature as wild, untamable, organic, legacy of German Romanticism.

"Idea of nature."

M groans, quietly. She needs a change.

Pause.

Changed M in woman's bathroom, the only one with a baby changing station. A woman entered, stopped. "Bin ich richtig?" Then she saw the baby. She sat down to pee in one of two private stalls but couldn't. No sound. Left quickly. M was silent the whole time, listening too. I felt vaguely policed by her inability to pee, even tho it's a larger system that polices both of us, the fact that there are only male and female bathrooms, and only changing stations in female bathrooms—polices all three of us.

M is hungry. Bottle of "liquid gold," pumped early this morning. I warm it under my shirt, under my arm.

15:06

A couple sits down next to us, lights up. The man heaves his first exhale directly into the stroller. Need to move.

15:12

Café Liebling. Sidewalk table. SW corner of Helmholtzplatz. Also known as "Helmi."

Saw, on the way here, a mackerel tabby cat eating a wild tuft of grass anchored in a crack between sidewalk and building. Cats don't really eat grass, they air-jaw it, until something happens.

Ordered a glass of wine. M in Ergo. Hopping up and down lightly: fake-

walking.

A boy walks by eating a cone of neon-green crushed ice.

A man stands under the street sign, smoking. He holds his cigarette close to his body, at the exact center of his chest.

To the left of my table, on the far edge of the sidewalk, an orange box on metal legs, held down by a concrete block and connected via a thick black cord to a second metal box, built into the ground, hip-high.

The orange box has text on upper right: "Walther system bosecker."

The second metal box also has a sign: VATTENFALL.

An energy company. And another sign just under that sign:

Elektrizitätsversorgungsunternehmen.

I read the word as if watching a train pass.

Electricitymaintenancecompany.

Covering the entire surface of this box, front and back and sides: black graffiti, Michaux-like marks, calligraphic, some made with spray paint, others with black markers, others with pens, and even scratches, made with a knife or glass or some other sharp object, all of them are tags, signatures, emblems, acronyms, all of them are communicating with each other, writing over each other, tagging each other, graffiti on graffiti on graffiti, then there are decals or stickers covering the graffiti, also covered by graffiti, some have been torn off, leaving only a white streak of paper, which in turn has been written on, tagged, some have been torn off art-

fully—in one, everything has been removed except the face of a cartoon man with two eyeballs, a green moustache, nothing else.

A dog passes me while writing. Stops. Smells my shoe. Does not look up.

M is out. Will try transferring her from therefore to stroller. It works.

15:45

Pause. Sit down. First sip of wine. I note the urge to gulp entire glass.

Two women join me, share the table. They speak in German about a mutual friend named Marlena, M's name. One woman has enormous black glasses. Nearly a helmet.

A woman arrives at another table, puts her feet up on the chair next to her. She is wearing hot pink sneakers, and paging through VOGUE. The pages are flicked quickly, so quickly I can't imagine anything is being seen. Skimming images.

Late afternoon sun, steady, warm. Everything softens. The waiter walks by with two caipirinhas on a tray—sunlight bouncing through ice cubes, glass, tufts of green mint.

Sound of woman flipping through VOGUE.

M wakes. Still tired, rubbing her eyes. Back to therefore.

Woman approaching with baby in a Moby.

Suddenly, as if called by the afternoon sun, the softened edges of things, there are babies everywhere. In a stroller, crossing the street. Another

stroller to the right. Another baby, or three-year-old, pushing his own empty stroller, passes me. And then a woman just behind him, pregnant, pushing another stroller, itself empty. It's all very confusing.

Standing with M in therefore, leaning against VATTENFALL box, waiting to get electrocuted.

A couple sits down, the man w/his back to me, a shoulder bag on his back, made of brown fur. He turns in his seat and I see that he is holding a dog in his lap. The dog has the same brown fur as shoulder bag.

M is hungry. Need to feed her the rest of the bottle.

Pause.

I felt nervous and self-conscious feeding her in public, embarrassed. Something about the intimacy of eating and drinking made public. Something about the vulnerability of infants being most visible when they are eating, drinking. And I'm only holding a bottle; no part of my body is also exposed, visible. Suddenly I notice a woman seated a few tables over, looking at me, someone I know, she's the girl from the bike repair shop, with whom I have flirted, mildly. She saw that I noticed her watching me feed M and she turned away, turning her head slowly and evenly to the other side of her body, careful to convey absolutely nothing.

A man walked by, looked over, grimaced.

A woman walked by, looked over, grimaced.

I am not a solitary man sitting in space, recording and observing space.

I am someone on whom someone depends.

I am someone on whom someone else depends.

I am someone on whom someone depends and on whom someone else depends so that this someone else can work.

16:54

Pause.

Saturday, October 20th.

Home

10:00

Weather: unknown.

18° Celsius

Wanted to start early, get out of the apartment, get to Helmholtzplatz, but M is sleeping hard, don't want to wake her. On a whim I google HHP and find, to my astonishment, a website featuring a clear and navigable 360 degree HD view of HHP. Using mouse pad and cursor I can turn left, right, zoom in and out, move forward, circle the park, back up. Unlike googlemaps, with its hovering, panoptic perspective, the camera's perspective is that of a pedestrian. It starts on the NW corner of park, facing a café named Frida Kahlo. I click on full screen. My CPU is maxed out; the fan whirs. The screen is flat and airless but clear. Movement and direction is suggested by a white arrow in a black circle, positioned a few feet forward, on the ground. The edges, the periphery, are blurred—distorted, stretched—a wide screen camera. Depth is suggested by the vanishing street, or the line of rooftops disappearing down a given street. Long shadows fall off objects. Late afternoon. I turn right and the perspective doesn't turn, but swings, artificially balanced, as if one's head were bubble.

I press the “up” button and the camera swings up to sky, blue sky, and there’s the sun, off to right, the buildings shoot up, the lampposts, the street signs, and I have the feeling that I’m on the ground, flat on my back on the cobblestones, dead.

I close the page, clicking forcefully, as if sending it away. Instead I look up Helmholtz. Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz.

A 19th-century German physicist and doctor known for his discoveries and theories about vision, opticality, the perception of colors and objects, visual space, depth, distance.

He has a crater on the moon named after him.

Alexander G. Bell claimed that he invented the telephone only because he couldn’t read German and mistranslated the instructions of one of Helmholtz’s diagrams to mean that frequencies could be transmitted by a wire.

Mistranslation, accidents, mistakes, glitches, imperfections, errors, the unforeseen emerges—potential.

I find two of his books, translated into English, on archive.org: *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* and the three volume *Treatise on Physiological Optics*. I print out a few chapters from each.

*

Frida Kahlo Cafe
Helmholzplatz

13:15

20° Celsius.

Weather: blue sky

K joins us, she has offered to watch M for a while—take her for a walk around the park in the kinderwagen.

The café. Brown tables. Brown chairs. I sit on Lychnerstrasse, facing Raumerstrasse. I'm looking back at the perspective from which I looked earlier, at home, virtually.

The screen was silent, dead. The café is packed, alive, bodies next to bodies, elbows touching elbows, legs beneath tables searching for room.

A dog right in front of me, a shaggy Benji-like mut, and another dog, a Dalmatian, a few tables away.

Next to my notebook the Helmholtz chapters, and a printout of the table of contents of *Treatise on Physiological Optics*. The first chapter:

Concerning the Perceptions in General

Pages 1-37

The illusions of the senses, 1-6.

Difficulty in observing subjective sensations, 6-10.

Influence of experience, 10-18.

Agreement between the apperception and the object, 18-24.

Inductive conclusions, 24-29.

Influence of movements, 29.

Law of causation, 29-35.

Historical, 35-37.

A bee lands on the side of my pen while writing the word “historical.”

A chair shifts.

A dog whines, softly.

I close my eyes, continue writing.

Two people speaking French, a man and a woman.

Both voices are relatively similar, and the high-pitched voiced could easily be the man's.

Two people speaking French.

The end of a trail of cigarette smoke.

A dog whines, different dog.

A piece of paper being crumpled hastily by hands.

Table jolts. Server brings my coffee, ordered when I first sat down. I smell it.

More French.

One of the dogs whines again, softly.

Children screaming, yelling—far off.

A bird chirps.

A cell phone rings.

A bird chirps again.

Car tires on cobblestones.

A bird calls out, one short trill.

Familiar smell of detergent. My shirt.

Two adults, one voice deeper than the other, but only slightly, pass on my left, talking to each other.

Another voice, deep, far-off, talking forcefully.

A quick rattle-like laugh.

An opened but loose newspaper being snapped taut.

A sharp brief whistle, a call, just behind me.

Someone to my left, far-off, begins whistling.

The bird or a bird responds, three short staccato-like trills.

A man sighs, heavily but luxuriously.

Both dogs whine together.

Voices of a waiter, a table of people, to my right.

One voice, speaking French, says the word “omelet” twice.

Then three other people say the same word, order the same thing, all with French accents.

I find my coffee by moving my hand slowly over the table.

A low voice behind me speaking German suddenly says the phrase “first time” in English.

Car tires moving over stones.

Laughter.

The French people at table to right begin chuckling together—or perhaps it’s another table, a language I don’t understand.

Server is back, speaking broken English, the common language.

A bike chain rattles, trailing off down the street behind me.

“With cheese?” “Oui.”

Several birds chirp furiously.

One of the dogs shakes his head, soft ears flapping. A sublime sound.

An infinite number of sounds are abandoned while I write down one sound.

My right leg is numb, although it’s unclear why I know that.

“Aber es geht nicht.”

More chuckling.

Distant sounds: a child crying out—shouting a name. Large heavy cars. Same child shouts same name. No airplanes. Car doors, two, closing,

almost at the same time. A dog barks—high-pitched, insistent (a small dog?).

The server returns to the French table with drinks, or food, because they all exclaim “Allors!”

Someone walks by slowly, wearing heels or hard boot heels. Someone walks by quickly.

A basketball or a soccer ball bounces, twice, three times.

Murmur of conversations all around, an undifferentiated sonic field. All the sounds together, the animals and objects, the utterances and sighs, the machines and the sound produced by the encounters between materials, between animals and objects, animals and animals, objects and objects, all altered by the space, bouncing off the large glass café windows, the table tops, water glasses, stones, the buildings, entering my body, my dead right leg, resonating. Out of all this murmuring, words. A scraping sound, metal on metal. Birds.

French, German, Spanish, Dutch.

Someone snorting.

Clank of cutlery on plates, ceramic.

A whistle.

“Na klar.”

A plastic bag rustling.

Bike gears shifting.

Someone coughs, as if by accident.

German. French. English.

A knife clatters to the ground.

A dog whines.

Chairs bearing weight being moved or slid—heavy scuffing sound.

Birds, several, overlapping trills, calls.

A car with the radio blaring—loud, then fading away.

French. Greek.

Car wheels on stones.

Another car, moving in the same direction.

Cackling laughter.

French. English.

Empty chairs being slid out from a table.

A nickering sound.

A child screaming a phrase, far-off, indecipherable.

A metal store window being rolled up, or down.

Out of all this murmuring, words.

A lighter, flicked twice.

Laughter.

“Les Omlettes,” announces the server.

A dog whines—long, anguished.

A car passes.

Russian. German. Dutch.

A group of bodies walk by, quickly, one of them talking excitedly, breathlessly.

A crash—not too loud—distant.

Something sliding across something.

A clicking sound, a bike tire, something stuck in it, passing on my left.

Words out of all this murmuring.

Pause.

I open my eyes.

The sounds are still there. No part of my body can turn them fully off. It's

not that sound enters more directly than sight but that it enters continuously, at least for hearing people.

Immediately I turn to the French table. There are four of them, all middle-aged, two men, two women.

A bird with a yellow leaf in its beak lands above them, on a tiny ledge in the space where the awning meets the buildings. A small crack, a hole, into which the bird disappears, then reemerges, just as quickly, without leaf. Flies to tree above sidewalk. Flies down and lands on pavement—lets himself land. Picks up another leaf.

I miss M.

Murmuring words out of all this.

13:53.

Pause.

14:06

The sound of a kickstand being flipped up—a vibrating, cartoonish thud—makes me want to start again. I was reading Helmholtz on “the influence of shadows on our perception of depth.”

The sun is setting right in front of me.

Shadow of a coffee saucer

Shadow of a teaspoon dangling off edge of saucer’s shadow

Shadows of the French, leaving, moving over my eyes as they walk past

Shadow of chair legs

the sugar dispenser on all the tables

empty water glasses on a table
a sidewalk tree to my left
the dead trees—posts—used to prop up the tree, stabilize it
bike leaning against posts, delicate spoke-shadows
a street sign, its pole
moving under a moving bicycle
beneath all the feet, the lifted feet
a woman carrying a bucket of sunflowers upside down
a monster truck in the hands of a child, a toy
the server passing over my table, holding two plates, each
 holding two golden tacos
a man's hands
a bee
a car, car-sized, under the car
a man, a round man, walking with a hula-hoop around his waist
hands taking money out of a wallet
a man at the next table, his lower eyelashes
between the cracks in the cobble stones
behind the ears of those sitting next to me
in their ears

Pause.

Two golden tacos. Frida Kahlo. Only now do I realize it's a Mexican restaurant.

I glance at a couple sitting next to me, their menus.

"Bistec Diego Rivera."

The woman lights a Pall Mall.

Shadow of her sunglasses on the table—an ironic shadow.

M and K return.

Pause.

Sunday, October 20th, 2012

Café Wohnzimmer

Helmholtzplatz

12:05 pm.

17° Celsius.

Weather: blue sky.

M sleeps.

I don't want to forget this: yesterday as we were leaving the Frida Kahlo Café K saw a man ride by on a motorcycle wearing rollerblades.

Full sun. I sit two tables down from the end table, where we sat on Friday.

Last night I read a speech by Derrida which begins: "I will speak in English, which is not my language, so it is more just."

Heute schreibe ich auf Deutsch (*in or from or with or out of, out of*) or try to, somewhere between both.

Gestern abend habe ich auch gelesen ein Text von Helmholtz über seine Theorie von Glanz (*luster, sheen, brilliance, that which sparkles, gleams, as if lit from within, luster*).

Was (*what*) hat Glanz, was glänzt:

Orangensaftpfütze (*orange juice puddle*), im Boden (*floor, bottom*) eines kleinen (*small*) Champagneglas.
 Der Rand (*rim*) eines (*from a, of a*) schwarzen (*black*) Plastikaschenbecher (*plastic ash cup*).
 Glanz existiert auch (*also*) auf dem grünen Lack (*paint*) auf den Holzstühlen (*wooden chairs*).
 Der Rand (*edge*) einer weißen Espressotasse.
 Die Haare (*red*) eines Mädchens (*or baby*) im Kinderwagen, die (*absent-mindedly*) in der Nase popelt.
 Der Lack eines blauen Mercedes (*our lady mercies*).
 Ein metallenes Cafemesser in der Mitte auf dem Fussweg.
 Die Ecke (*corner, lower left*) eines Eisladenschilds (*shield, sign*).
 Zwei silberne Hemdschnüre (*shirt threads, dangling*) einer Frau, die vorbeiläuft.
 Der ganze rote Bart (*his entire beard, as if in flames*) eines Mannes, der direkt im Sonnenlicht sitzt.
 Die Sonne im hinteren Fenster des Mercedes (*an engine invented by a man who named the engine after his daughter*).
 Wasser in eine Flasche, in der Hand eines glatzköpfigen (*smooth-headed*) Mannes.
 Der Perlenohrring der Frau, die rechts von mir sitzt.
 Der Rand (*lip*) einer orangen Müllkiste (*garbage bin, bucket, container*), die an einem Strassenschild (*street sign, shield*) hängt.
 Jede Fusselspitze (*frayed threads surrounding a rolled up ball of thread, fuzz, the fuzz*) auf einer blauen Baumwolledecke.
 Das silberne Pentagramm (*five lines*) der Halskette (*throat chain*) der Kellnerin (*waitress*) (*occupations always assigned gender*) (*one of two*) (*to be inflected*) (*to be trapped in a word*) (*a language*).
 Eigentlich die Haare von allen Leuten.
 Aber kein Glanz auf den Federn (*feathers*) der (*from, of*) Vögel (*starlings, sparrows*), nur auf ihren Schnäbeln (*beaks, bills*).
 Der Rand (*rim*) von einer Kiwi (*the fruit*) scheibe (*slice*).

Ich habe Durst.

Pause.

Ich bin aufgestanden, um Wasser zu bestellen, aber die Schlange war zu lang und ich konnte M nicht allein draussen lassen . . . Genau in diesem Moment sind J und L gekommen. *I couldn't leave the one I was caring for, but I was in need of care, and at this moment, friends arrived.*

Aber L ist eine neue Freundin; sie kommt aus Colorado. Eine Dichterin. Und J ist eine Sängerin und Dichterin—beste Art von Sänger. Sie bleiben bei M, während ich Wasser bestelle. *They are the best kind of friends one can have, poets, musicians, poets who are musicians.*

Wir diskutieren and dann schreiben wir zusammen, während M schläft. *We talk and then we continue together, write together, while M sleeps.*

Ein Mann läuft vorbei (*a signal and the words, the words another signal, one which is not my own, which I don't feel secure in, as if the signal were not my own, since nothing is, not even this, as I give back to it*).

Ein Mann läuft vorbei mit einem Pferdschwanz, er hält eine große gelbe Tasche vor der Brust fest.

Ein Mann läuft vorbei mit einem kleinen braunen Papierbeutel in seiner linken Hand.

(*Men moving through space and carrying things, seemingly always carrying something, a yellow bag, a paper bag, men on missions, men and their impossible missions.*)

Eine schwangere Frau kommt auf dem Fussweg heran, kurz vor dem Café—ich sehe das im Augenwinkel—bedeckt sie ihren Bauch mit dem offenen Mantel. (*Peripheral knowledge, partial knowledge, wrote Harraway, the only objectivity.*)

Ein Mann und eine Frau, Hand in Hand.

Ein Mann gegenüber, im Park: er spricht in ein Handy, aber seine Hände sind in den Taschen. (*And the men talking on phones, cell phones, ear pieces, talking in public wearing headsets, with their hands in their pockets, men with their hands in their pockets talking to other men holding other phones, in other spaces, other sets of heads in other spaces.*)

Die Kellnerin mit dem Silberpentagramm rennt vorbei, das Pentagramm schlägt gegen ihr Brustbein.

J schreibt und L schreibt und wir sagen nichts. Zu schreiben neben einander—friedlich, wie schlafen. (*To write beside another, with another, others, a kind of sleeping, not kinship but akin to it.*)

Der Mann mit dem Pferdschwanz kommt zurück, die grosse gelbe Tasche leer und zusammengeknüllt in seiner linken Hand. (*Mission accomplished.*)

Ein Mann und eine Frau, Hand in Hand.

Ein alter Mann mit eine Plastiktasche mit Rädern, die er hinter sich her zieht.

Hinter dem Mann: eine Frau mit einem roten Koffer, auch mit Rädern.

Der Mann gegenüber im Park pinkelt jetzt in die Büsche, halb in den Büschen, er redet noch. (*And behaving in public space as if it were theirs, as*

if they owned it, peeing in space, peeing on public space, altho I knew a friend, a woman, once, who stopped in mid-sentence on a crowded Brooklyn street and hung off the curb, between two cars, a quick shake and she didn't, not once, lose eye contact, stop talking.)

Ein alter Mann mit Strohhut und grauem Bart.

Ein junger Mann in Jeans, seine Sonnenbrille gefaltet und an den Gürtel gehängt. (*Acid wash jeans. Brave.*)

Ein mittelaltes Paar; sie sieht aus wie Joan Jett.

Ein Frau mit großen High Heels aus Holz.

Ein Mann läuft vorbei, hält plötzlich an, dreht sich um, läuft zurück.

Ein Mann und eine Frau, Hand in Hand. Beide mit Pferdschwanz.

Ein Mann mit einer roten Flasche in der Hand, er hält sie, als ob er sie verstecken möchte.

13:57.

Pause.

Halt. Der Mann mit der roten Flasche kommt zurück, aber ohne Flasche.

Pause.

Wir reden über die Verbindung zwischen Füßen und Genitalien—beide besetzen die selbe Stelle im Gehirn.

“Vielleicht kann man durch spazieren angetörnt werden.”

M wacht auf. Während ich esse, hält J M, dann halte ich M, während J auf Toilette geht.

Und jetzt kommt I, gerade, als J und L gehen müssen.

J und L und ich hatten über die “politics of the future” gesprochen—L unterrichtet im Moment ein Seminar zu diesem Thema—die problematische Verbindung zwischen Verwandtschaft und Zukunft—eine ethische Handlung ist, wenn man etwas für alle und für den gegenwärtigen Moment machen, für Dinge und Tiere—und nicht, wenn man etwas für die “children of the future” macht. Genau. Ich sagte: und wir müssen alle Dinge wahrnehmen: die Politik der Dinge, alles das uns umkreist, alle Dinge, die wir umkreise.

14:00

M ist aufgewacht und ich muss sie füttern. Ja, ich denke für sie nicht voraus, ich denke für sie im Moment. Ich denke im Moment, nach und an: die Autos, *the cars*, die Tische, *the tables*, Stühle, *chairs*, Gläser, *glasses*, Tassen, *cups*, Strohhüte, *straw hats*, die violette Tasche unter dem Mercedes, *the purple bag under the Mercedes*, zwei Fahrräder, *two bicycles*, Reben, *vines*, Bäume, *trees*, der Park, *the square*, eine kleiner weißer Hund, *a small white dog*, Mädchen mit Pfeil und Bogen, *girl with bow and arrow* und auch die strassenlampe, *Streetlamp*, glühbirne, *Lightbulb*, fußweg, *Sidewalk*, der kleine schmutzige braune vogel unter M’s kinderwagen, *the small brown filthy Bird under M’s Stroller*, blatt und auch blätter, *leaf and leaves*, und andere Dinge, wie die Zukunft, die Ethik und auch Joan Jett. *Joan Jett and the Blackhearts*.

Pause.

Ich lese ein bisschen in Helmholtz Vol. II, Inhaltsverzeichnis, Kapitel 22:

Duration of the Sensation of Light

pages 205-228

Persistence of Luminous Impression on the Retina, 205-206.

Rotating Discs and Intermittent Illumination, 206-215.

Colour Tops, 215-218.

Stroboscopic Discs, 218-221.

Anorthoscope, 221-224.

“We cannot as yet demonstrate, it is true, that the sensation arises after the light has begun to act, but we can easily show that it continues after the light has quite ceased to act.”

Ich starre *I stare* auf den Sonne und schließ *close* meine Augen und die Sonne, das Ding, ist *still* da—nicht gelb, *white*, weiß.

Das anhaltende Sonnenlicht auf den Caféstühlen, auf den grünen altersschwachen Holzbrettern, und auch auf dem bleich-gelben Apfelkern, der auf die Strasse liegt, *as if were the sun were eating the apple*, und auch auf der meergrün-und-blauen Hose einer Frau, die neben mit sitzt, *and also a small yellow leaf on the fussweg, bright yellow, and thin, Sonnenhaut*.

Jetzt kommt I with M. Sie muss gehen. M schläft noch. Und genau als I gehen muss, kommt A kommt, mit ihrem Sohn und ihrem Partner S und *we all sit and talk and lean back in our chairs and talk and when two of us talk the third becomes quiet and turns their face to the sun*.

Pause.

Purell Instant Hand Sanitizer. *Purell Instant Hand Sanitizer*.

iPhone. *iPhone.*

Eine kleine gelbe Sesamstraßenpuppe.

Kleiner grüner Frosch auf M's Babydecke.

I have to change M's Windeln, once again in der Frauentoilette, the only one that has a Wickeltisch. Niemand ist inside. No one stören uns. M ist wide-eyed. Ganz still. Ich wechsele ihre Windeln und wir sind both totally still, breathing together.

Als ich zurückkomme, ist U da. M schreit, als sie U sieht, als ob *she were being released from prison.*

The sun is away.

Because M and U and S speak more I write a little more.

A small girl on the sidewalk stops and observes her reflection in the side of a blue Mercedes.

It is colder and the sounds are shorter, faster.

The man with the horse tail and his yellow bag sits on the P O K E bench.

A man walks by. He squeezes again and again a tennis ball in his left hand.

The people from the Café have all gone and the chairs are still there, all over the sidewalk strewn, which miss the forms, which they made to support were.

17:02

Pause.

A und U sprechen über Ernst Jandl. Ich *hear* Yodel.

Zwei Frauen laufen vorbei, *the first gay couple I've seen*, Hand in Hand,
the first happy couple I've seen.

Ein schwarzer Hund, der sein Herrchen beschattet, auf den Fersen.

Ein Blatt fällt auf den blauen Mercedes.

Und ein anderer Hund, rechts, hinter einem Baum.

Ich möchte auch shreien. M schreit noch einmal und ich schreie. Abend
ist nah.

Die letzte Kapitel in Helmholtz' Buch: "Duplicity Theory and Twilight
Vision."

Ein Taxi hält vor uns. Das "i" ist ein Bierglas.

Im Park höre ich zum ersten Mal das Geräusch von Tischtennis.

Ein großer Mann läuft vorbei und *suddenly for no reason he bounces a
ping pong ball once on the pavement, catches it, repockets it, all this without
looking down*.

17:29

Pause.

Two boys walk up to P O K E and sit down with a large bag of potato chips, open. When one boy's hand comes out, the other boy's hand goes in. I watch them methodically eat the whole bag. They do not talk.

Half moon over the park, blue sky, a few last clouds hanging around, like us.

A girl picks up a large yellow leaf in the park. Then another and another. She fills both fists with leaves and walks off with her hands full of leaves, leaf hands.

3 pages left in Claire Fontaine. Three days. One notebook.

U leaves with M, back to the apartment. I am the last person sitting outside, everyone has moved indoors, or left.

A van stops, blocking the street, and the door slides open. A car behind the van honks impatiently. Honks again, this time longer, louder. Then a woman with a baby climbs out of the van and screams at the car. She looks at me and shrugs.

A yellow leaf falls. Closer to dusk, twilight. No children in the park, sound of.

A man walks by with a small child on his hip. He kisses the side of her head each time one of his feet comes down and her head bobs towards him. She does not seem to notice. She looks always straight ahead. A fierce gaze.

I am waiting for something—lingering. Ich lungere hier herum.

Der Mond, von Wolken verdeckt. Der wolkenverdeckte Mond. Der Mond, den Wolken verdecken.

A man and woman come out of the café. They stop and rub their foreheads together, eyes closed, before going separate ways.

Church bells.

18:00.

A bicycle locked to a street sign pole. The back brake light, now that it's twilight, glows—is left on.

A man walks by, rubbing his cheek.

Another man walks by, rubbing his hands.

A woman walks by and rubs her palms on her jeans.

A couple in the park, talking. The man raises his hand and gestures with his fingers, as if turning the dial on an invisible safe.

A bat jerks up over Helmholtz.

Sound only, no sight.

18:21

It occurs to me that this is the first time I've been alone, writing—really alone.

Es ist Zeit, zu gehen.

CONTRIBUTORS

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JUDGE: **Lia Purpura** is the author of seven collections of essays, poems and translations, most recently, *Rough Likeness* (essays). Her awards include a 2012 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, NEA and Fulbright Fellowships, three Pushcart prizes, work in *Best American Essays 2011*, the AWP Award in Nonfiction, the Beatrice Hawley Award, and Ohio State University Press awards in poetry. Recent work appears in *Agni, Field, The Georgia Review, Orion, The New Republic, The New Yorker, The Paris Review*, and elsewhere. She is Writer in Residence at The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and teaches at the Rainier Writing Workshop.

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SUBMISSION SIZE: 1 piece per submission, up to 5,000 words.



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